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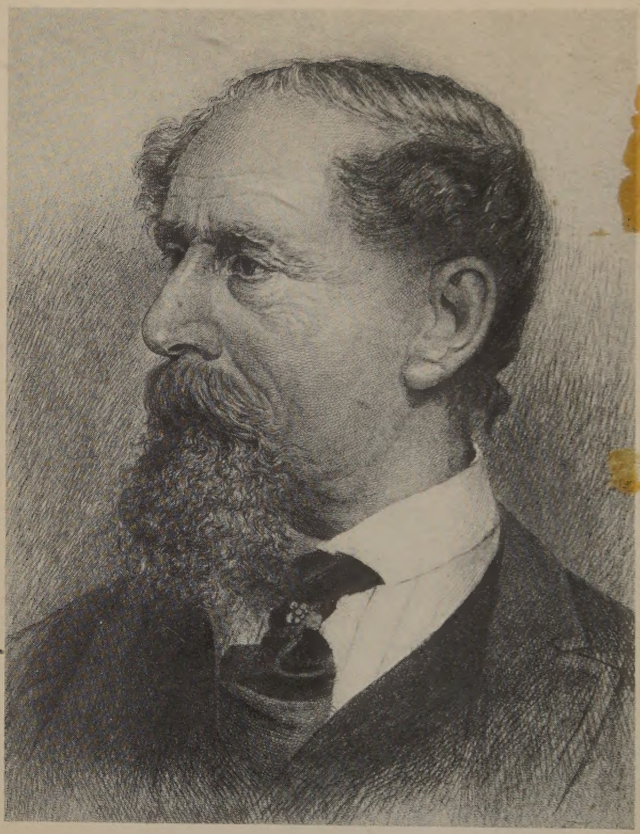

Most truly Yours
Charles Dickens

CHARLES DICKENS

By

RICHARD BURTON

AUTHOR OF

Forces in Fiction, Etc.

WITH PORTRAIT

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CHARLES DICKENS

DICKENS

1129

CHAPTER I

A Threshold View

THE façade of a quaint little building in Lincoln's Inn Field, London, bears the following words: "Old Curiosity Shop; immortalized by Charles Dickens." This is not the original building in which the writer set his famous story. And the language is that of hyperbole. No writer is known to be immortal, inasmuch as we who call him so must be ourselves immortal to pronounce judgment. Nor has any writer of them yet learned the trick of perpetuity. When we call Shakespeare or Homer "immortal," we mean, and can only mean, that a certain author has survived the obliteration of time a few hundred or a few thousand years, a mere nothing in the great onward sweep of the universe; indeed, not much in the course of the established records of men.

Nevertheless, that inscription above the portal in Portsmouth Street is significant. It gives a hint of the hold of Dickens upon the affectionate inter-

ests of readers. He is one of the very few authors using English who, more than a century after his birth, seem secure in a general regard, and whose works not merely have their place in any well-regulated library, but are in some sort a household possession to countless lovers of books. It begins to look very much as if the works of Charles Dickens were more than those of a representative author of the early Victorian period; being, so far as we may use the word, a permanent contribution to the literature of the English-speaking peoples. Nay, since this writer is known and loved far beyond English-speaking borders, he is, I believe, a world force in letters. When I was a student in Germany, I found everywhere upon the reading tables of cultivated folk the books of just two English-using authors: Charles Dickens and Mark Twain. The wife of the leading astronomer of Holland told me that she had brought up her husband and all her children on Dickens's works, having read them aloud to the family no less than six times through! Such facts speak for themselves. His position solidifies with time, though the critical estimate of him shows its fluctuations. But to-day, critically, and by popular tests, he is — with the possible exception of Shakespeare—the most widely known and most beloved writer of his race. Shakespeare, if our relation to him is less personal and warm, has more of magisterial weight; he is read perforce by the many

in school and college; his plays are in libraries as a matter of course. The cultivated few read him for pleasure. About half his plays, hardly more, are really alive in the theater.

But among those who read for no other reason than for enjoyment (and what a vast host they make!), Dickens unquestionably comes first. As near as it can be said of any one person, he is *the* modern English author. Whatever his faults, the immense fervor of life in his books and their steady appeal to men's bosom interests and passions make him a primate among English book men. The sense of all this was crystallized and accentuated in 1912, when the centenary of his birth was celebrated with such ample and enthusiastic recognition. It was no conventional remembering, but a tribute having in it plain elements of heartfelt spontaneity.

For a time after his death he lost ground with the critics, though never with the general reading public, in comparison with his contemporary, and in a sense his rival, Thackeray. These two, so utterly unlike in every way, are inevitably contrasted because they were distinctly the two leading authors in the middle nineteenth century; and also because the popularity of Thackeray, when he began to write his great books, was the first challenge to Dickens's unique place in the suffrages of readers of fiction in that period.

Gradually, Thackeray came more and more to be

regarded as the artist of fiction, while Dickens, to whom a genius for the comic was readily granted, was denied the artistic quality awarded to the other. He was referred to increasingly as a careless workman, a writer who did not command style as did Thackeray, and one whose tendencies toward the theatric and the didactic injured his craftsmanship. This view gained such a vogue among those who put themselves in a critical attitude toward books that not many years ago, I am credibly informed, in a famous eastern university a course in nineteenth-century literature was offered in which no mention of Dickens was made.

But within the last few years a reaction, distinct and strong, from this depreciation, has come about. Critics like Andrew Lang, William E. Henley, George Gissing and G. K. Chesterton, widely divergent in type and view, but trained observers all and of commanding influence, have come forth in valiant appreciation of the man of Gadshill. And they are a unit in this: that while they are not blind to the faults of their author, they recognize the dominant and representative quality of a man of genius who has done great things and still exercises an indubitable magic.

Two antithetic literary attitudes or concepts of literature lie behind these two estimates of Dickens: that which looked at him askance and did him scant justice, and the later and present one, which most

heartily cries up his undiminished worth. The former has implicit in it that conception of literature which insists that it shall not involve questions of conduct nor drag in moral issues; but rather confine itself alone to the quality of workmanship. What a writer may choose to exhibit is primarily his affair; how he does it is the business of the critic. This critical position has been popular in our present generation, and some twenty years ago seemed authoritative. "Art for art's sake" was a catch phrase frequently heard, and to praise any writer for a healthful view or an obvious desire to do good by his writings was deemed rococo. Oscar Wilde will, perhaps, be pointed to historically as the logical extreme of this critical attitude. And a definite new school of English fiction marched under this gonfalon.

The recent reaction from this means a realization that, after all, life is larger than what is called art; that the artist of letters is only a man writing, and can not shake off the fact that he *is* a man, subject to the same obligations in his work as other human beings in theirs. Beauty, we are coming to see, is its own excuse for being only when it is vitally related to the life without which it could not exist, since life furnishes, and always must furnish, the raw material from which art weaves its Nisus-like robe of wonder.

And the return of this broader and saner view,

for such I believe it to be, has been of advantage to Dickens; because he, of all authors, has most openly insisted on relating his work to the toiling and moiling humanity he would serve, and has even boisterously asserted his wish to help the world by his books. His claim, for these reasons, upon our acceptance is a double claim: his unexampled power of visualizing the life of his time and giving us a sense of its gusto; and his efficacy to touch the heart with pity and love, that we may realize the universal brotherhood and try to be a part of it. Frankly, Dickens is a master of the imagination, but just as truly a mighty moralist. He stands or falls by these twin tests. All his work suggests that literature, to make a wide and steady appeal, must do, not one of these things, but both of them.

This prefatory broad statement will be amplified and illustrated, as he is considered in the particulars of his art and work, in the further critical treatment which follows the copious selections from his books.

CHAPTER II

The Man

THE lives of some authors hardly seem to throw light upon their works. Especially is this true in the case of novelists and dramatists, who in these objective forms of expression hide behind their characters and do not reveal the maker of these characters. It may, however, be premised that, even when the literary form is less subjective and personal, and the personality of the writer harder to detect, all authors are so interwoven with their works that, had we a magic glass to look within their minds and be aware of their every act, with its corresponding motive, we should find that the literature they made was but veiled autobiography, after all.

But some authors, far more frankly than others, put themselves into their writings, are integrally a part of it, can not be separated from it; so that a sympathetic comprehension of their personality and a knowledge of the story of their life is of great assistance in the way it aids us to understand their professional labor.

Dickens was emphatically such a man, and we may therefore set down the chief matters of his life, confident that they will be of avail in the appreciation of his books. His life story is in itself of compelling interest; its interpretative value may be added as an incentive, were any needed, to follow those details which are of particular significance, looked back upon from the place of light and leadership he attained.

When we say of a human being that he is self-made, we are using a rather shallow phrase, since we are all self-made, so far as we are made at all. What is really meant by the stock expression is that in such a case, more than is normal, character has triumphed over circumstances. In education, for example, we imply that it has been irregular or lacking in the conventional drill; as to parentage, that the person in question was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth. These supposed limitations are true of Charles Dickens, whose father was a clerk in the Navy Department, in Portsmouth, when the son was born on February 7, 1812. That father, who was to be twice immortalized as Micawber in *David Copperfield* and the Father of the Marshalsea in *Little Dorrit,* was an impecunious optimist whose frequent changes of occupations and inability to pay his rent were external signs of a character which may be described, at least in retrospect, as one of lovable weakness. Restricted, im-

poverished, shabby genteel as was the life of the family, it is impossible to study the Dickens ménage at close range without the feeling that John Dickens was, in his way, a gentleman. The letter following shows just what is meant better than any words; no vulgarian could have penned it. It was written to Chapman and Hall, long time the publishers of Dickens's novels:

"34 Edward Street, Portman Square.

"GENTLEMEN—It has occurred to me, *at a moment of some difficulty,* you may be willing to extend to me your obliging assistance. If it is consistent or convenient with your arrangements, will you do me the favor to deduct the four pounds I owe you from the enclosed bill for twenty pounds due April 7, with three shillings, four pence, the amount of the interest, and let me have the balance, fifteen pounds, fifteen shillings? *Do not suppose I ask this on any other footing than that of obligation* conferred upon me; and I assure you, though small in amount, its effects to me *are matters of grave consideration,* because anything that would occasion my absence from the Gallery *would be productive of fatal effects.* You may consider it an intrusion that I should apply to you in a moment of difficulty. I feel it to be so; but, recollecting how much your interests are bound up with those of my son, I flatter myself that if you can confer a favor upon the

father without transgressing any rule that you have laid down, and that without inconvenience, you may feel disposed to do so. I do not enhance it when I say that the favor, though small, yet under the circumstances would be a signal obligation conferred on me. Gentlemen,

"Your obliged and obedient servant,

"JOHN DICKENS."

No lover of Charles Dickens can miss the delicious Micawberish flavor of this composition; as Percy Fitzgerald points out, it might with hardly a change appear in the pages of *Copperfield*.

Mrs. Dickens, too, was a lady, however acidulous of temper; the fact that at one time when the family fortunes were at ebb tide (if the figure may be used, when full tide seems never to have come), she set up as principal of a female academy, points the same way of gentility. The frequent references to Dickens's background as altogether wretched and common need to be qualified by these facts and inferences. His people were poor folk of the upper middle class, neither more nor less.

The difficulties of John Dickens in the practical matter of supporting his family had its effect upon the little Charles; it gave him scant schooling, little of the tender nurture and none of the luxury and privilege of a more fortunate youth. He was left much alone, apparently; was thrown in on himself,

which was not all bad for an imaginative child of reading habit. Externally the life was a series of shabby lodgings, in Portsmouth, Rochester, Chatham, and then London. But in what the elder Dickens grandiloquently referred to as his "library," meaning a shelf of well-worn books in a corner of the living-room, was fodder of the best for a future man of letters: *The Arabian Nights,* and *Don Quixote,* Swift and Sterne, Goldsmith and *Crusoe,* and the eighteenth-century novelists, Richardson, Fielding and Smollett. Herein browsed the little lad, rarely joining his playmates in the field sports outside; delicate, handsome, self-communing, he lived the life of dreams and of imagination. We know Smollett in special was his favorite, a very important thing to bear in mind in studying his career as writer, particularly its beginning. And of his style in general, it is not too much to say that it was based more than any one other influence on these eighteenth-century worthies; no bad literary progenitors, it will be confessed.

Given the sort of boy he was, impressionable, bookish, idealistic, two dark places in his early life may be emphasized for the light they throw. One is his brief term of employment, at the age of ten, in a shoe-blacking establishment, where his task in a dank cellar was to fill bottles with the viscous fluid for a wage of six shillings a week—pay so poor that the midday meal was omitted at times.

Dickens, the famous author, quivered sensitively when he mentioned this episode to his biographer, Forster; in his own home he never referred to it. It was a loathsome job, and he felt humiliated even by the memory of it. Some lads would have minded it less; there is nothing intrinsically degrading in such work. That Dickens took it as he did would seem to accentuate a sort of natural refinement and longing for what was fine and beautiful and romantic which was ingrain with him. He was naturally a peculiarly sensitive, high-strung fellow, delicate in his tastes, instinctively seeking what was gentle and gentlemanly. The other harsh thing was his early experience of the debtors' prison, the Marshalsea, where his father was immured for several years and where the boy Charles visited him often. Here again, the effect of the place upon such a nature as his must have been one of poignant pain; bitterly shameful the thought that his father was there as an enforced inmate!

One of the pictures we get of him is that of a sensitive-featured boy with his hair falling over his face in ringlets, walking grimy streets to and fro between his lodging and that prison. Another picture shows us the little Charles, with his ingratiating ways and attractive personality, frequenting pawn-shops to raise cash on such household goods of the family as might have some value. Who can doubt that at the base of the novelist's wonderful

power of envisaging the odds and ends of humanity lay these early experiences? Or that the sympathy which was the motor force of all he wrote was generated by the dark and stressful days of his youth and young manhood? A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind.

At sixteen we see him as office boy to an attorney; here, in less than two years' time, he acquired that knowledge of the lower world, observed at close range—for he was the keenest of observers—yet half instinctive, too, which comes forth so richly and delightfully in some of the great books, notably *Bleak House,* but also *Old Curiosity Shop, Copperfield, Oliver Twist, The Tale of Two Cities,* and others still. Dickens worked hard in this capacity, as he always did in whatever he undertook. His honorable sense of doing thoroughly what he was at is one of the denotements of his character. He studied stenography of nights, painfully acquiring the power of shorthand reporting. His father at this time was a shorthand reporter in the House of Commons, which is another testimonial to his parts; and the son may perhaps have felt that this was a possibility for him as well; for the law he never thought of as a potential profession. He was, too, practising authorship during these days, we may well believe; ambitious, full of dreams, eager to prove his quality, with his brain already teeming with the vision of London types and scenes. He

was observing in a way that was to bear fruit in the *Sketches by Boz,* in *Pickwick Papers* and in the earliest novels.

Soon leaving the attorney's dim-lighted chambers, at nineteen he took his place, like his father, in the reporter's gallery of the House, and rapidly became known as the best journalist employed for that purpose; one who could be trusted to get his copy back to the city in time for press, wherever over England he had gone to chronicle political gatherings. By this activity, his knowledge of men and things, and of Nature's face under all possible circumstances, was broadened and enriched. His own description of this newspaper life gives a lively idea of the nature of his occupation. It was all good preparation, albeit unconscious (perhaps the better for that reason) for the future writer and depicter of humanity. He began, with fear and trembling, to write out these observations and note-book jottings, and we get a picturesque account of how he surreptitiously dropped a manuscript into a letter box in Fleet Street and of the wild delight that filled him when it was accepted by a magazine. Here was the beginning of what was to eventuate in the first book, the *Sketches by Boz,* the collection of character studies, scenes and tales with which Dickens made his literary bow at the age of twenty-four, though much of the contents of the volume was written during the preceding years, when he was hardly

more than a boy. One of Charles's brothers was Moses by name; this was affectionately contracted to "Mos," after the familiar manner of family life. If you pronounce "Mos" with a cold in your head, it sounds like Boz; and we get the origin of the pen name used in our writer's first book; incidentally, too, we get a suggestion that the word has the long sound instead of the short one commonly given it to-day.

Sketches by Boz, in comparison with the mature work of Dickens, is exactly like the preliminary studio studies of a coming great painter. The tales, sketches, scenes and character delineations which make it up have the keen observational eye so typical of the author; the lively sense of humor of the external kind (the kind that rests in appearances), and the feeling for the dramatic contrasts of life. Potentially, you feel that Charles Dickens is here; yet such was his subsequent growth in depth, breadth and fellow feeling that you mark the immaturity of this firstling of his genius. The *Sketches* bear about the same relation to the Dickens of *Copperfield* and *Our Mutual Friend* that George Eliot's *Scenes from Clerical Life* bear to *The Mill on the Floss* and *Middlemarch.*

It was *The Old Monthly Magazine* to which he had sent that contribution, *A Dinner in Poplar Walk,* not included afterward in the Boz sketches. Mr. Hogarth, the managing editor of *The Morn-*

ing Chronicle, with which the young author was then engaged, thought highly of the Boz papers; and the mention of Hogarth's name serves to introduce another vastly important aspect of Charles Dickens's life, for the connection with the Hogarths qualified his whole after life.

It was natural that the young writer should have been admitted on terms of familiarity to the Hogarth home, where three agreeable girls, daughters of the house, were ready to welcome and make much of him. The eldest, Catherine, he was to marry; the youngest, Mary, who died at seventeen, in the sweet bloom of her youth, he tenderly loved and memorialized as Little Nell; the third sister, Georgina, remained as his life-long friend and house mate up to the day of his death, and only passed away herself in 1917. Why Dickens chose the less ethereal Catherine, in the light of subsequent happenings, will always remain a mystery. In a sketch of the author by two Frenchmen, Messieurs Keim and Lumet, an acute remark is made to the effect that Dickens at this period was in love with love rather than with a specific woman. He had been lonely, neglected; suddenly he entered into the heart-warming society of attractive girls, and was sensitively responsive to all that it meant. The woman who was his choice was his faithful companion for years, and bore him ten children. There was no scandal

involved in their separation, which occurred in 1857. The whole story will never be known; in truth, can the inner psychology of such experiences ever be revealed? But when the reader is asking himself why Charles Dickens married Catherine Hogarth, he must not for a moment forget that the young writer had a love romance. Two years before his marriage in 1836, he had met Maria Beadwell, daughter of a wealthy banker, and fallen romantically in love with her. The family, not unnaturally, objected; the girl was sent to Paris. Returning, she renewed relations with him, letters being exchanged through the kind intermediary of a friend. Then the family again stepped in, this time finally, and Maria, who does not appear to have cared overmuch, definitely gave her lover up and married one Winter, a wealthy merchant. That this affair was serious with Dickens we know; his passionate love-letters have of late been published (one of those publications which we welcome, because of the immense autobiographic value, and yet shrink from, as seeming too sacredly personal for the world's gaze); and when, twenty years afterward, the lady in question wrote the great novelist, he responded in a way to show that the young idyl remained such still in his memory. They met, and the illusion was gone forever. Alas, the Maria of the young dream was portly, scant of breath, and, far worse, rather

simpering and commonplace. She who was Dora, the child wife of Copperfield, became the silly Mrs. Finching of *Little Dorrit.*

With this episode in mind, it is impossible not to inquire if Catherine Hogarth were chosen in contrast with, in reaction from, the Dora fragile butterfly type; Catherine being the Agnes who succeeded the earlier and lighter girl? It is at least a plausible conjecture; and, in any case, the Beadwell episode can never be overlooked in any attempt to understand the heart history of Charles Dickens. At the age of twenty-four, then, Dickens married. His sketches and papers, later to be brought together under the pen name of "Boz," had been appearing for some three years and had met with some favor, though by no means creating any sensation. They were issued in book form this year of his marriage and attracted favorable attention to the clever young journalist, without setting the Thames afire. But Dickens was earning what was for those days a very good income by his journalistic connections and these occasional contributions of his pen to imaginative letters. He had a right to enter matrimony, yet felt that his spurs were to win, that he must labor hard to express what was in him, and to support his prospective family properly. He was of the type to be stimulated, not discouraged, in the fact that he had given hostages to fortune. Meanwhile, the opportunity offered which was to result

in a book that at a bound made him a national figure, starting him on the long and splendid career of nearly forty years as public entertainer, counselor, reformer, and friend. The familiar story of the genesis of *Pickwick* must be here retold once more.

Chapman and Hall, the publishers so long to be honorably identified with Dickens, had brought out his Boz sketches. They proposed to the noted caricaturist, Seymour, who wished to do a series of sporting scenes for them, that he should get the cooperation of Dickens in the way of letter-press. They thought well enough of his lively pen to select him for the task. The pay was fourteen pounds for each monthly instalment; it meant an addition of nearly one hundred dollars a month to the young husband's income (remember that each dollar bought more then than it does now), and Dickens gladly accepted. It is interesting to see that at the beginning of this famous bargain the pictures were the main thing; later, when Pickwick was born and Sam Weller began to talk, the tail wagged the dog, the letter-press ran away with the illustrations, to which may be added the tragic fact that Seymour, like so many humorists a man of melancholy disposition, committed suicide after the first issue—the no less famed Phiz going on with that aspect of the joint work in pictures now world known and loved.

At first the thing rather hung fire; Seymour's

tragic withdrawal was a bad effect in itself; and Dickens's early pages did not arouse immediate wide interest. Then, enter the beloved Sam Weller, and from that moment the success of *Pickwick* was assured. The young writer, the husband who could not brook failure, was able to draw a deep breath in the knowledge that he really had something to say which England, not merely literary critics and his fellow journalists, but the great general reading public was eager and glad to hear. From that moment the anxieties of Charles Dickens, writer, so far as the question of his reception by the world was concerned, were over.

The remainder of Dickens's life was, externally viewed, that of a famous literary man, courted, beloved, and honored to a degree seldom witnessed in literary annals. His books with scarcely an exception, and there were, from *Pickwick* to the unfinished *Mystery of Edwin Drood,* sixteen of them, only added to his reputation and helped to amass the considerable fortune acquired by his pen between 1836 and 1870, his death year. Looked at from without, and making a generalization, we might say that it is the record of one of Fortune's favorites, a sort of English *wunderkind.* And it may be added that Dickens himself enjoyed it all enormously, for his was a nature peculiarly gifted in that sympathetic appreciation of this world and all it embraces

which insures vivid living. Dickens could have said earlier what Bernard Shaw has said in our time: "I want to be thoroughly used up when I die." Indeed, he was, for he had lived intensely during his eight and fifty years. As he prospered in this world's goods, his manner of life kept pace with his increased means, and he lived more genially, on a more generous scale. His successive residences, Tavistock House, Devonshire Terrace, and the final country place famed as Gadshill, where the author in his maturity was able to inhabit a house his father had shown him as a boy and prophesied his ownership of, were outward indications of his substantial progress in a worldly sense. Dickens lived freely and handsomely as his income increased; his large family entailed an expensive establishment, and to the day of his death he felt the need of lashing his remarkable powers of production in order to keep up the scale of living and provide for others at his departure. He found in his public readings a way to add substantially to his fortunes, and doubtless his efforts in this field shortened his days. Some, including close friends, resented his doing this as below his dignity as a great author. Others attribute it to his greed for gold. It must be remembered that, even with the money thus acquired, Dickens's fortune amounted to less than half a million of American money; surely not sufficient

to justify the charge, in view of his being for a generation by all odds the best remunerated English author.

In attempting to come close to the man and understand his personality in relation to those common human experiences which mean life for us all, certain events and characteristics stand out for emphasis. Throughout his writing days, this author worked very hard at his adopted profession of letters, and there is always a sense of struggle as one follows his life-story, year by year. He took himself and his work seriously, and strove with all his powers to improve his gift and develop such skill as to make himself worthy of the great influence he exercised over his readers. No man of letters was more conscientious in this way than he; and it should be borne in mind when we ask, What of Dickens's artistry? Whatever the skill in craftsmanship he attained, however short he fell of the full perfection of his art, it was not done carelessly; he tried his very best to make himself a fine workman in the novel as a literary form. Thackeray, of the two, took his craft the more debonairly; there can be no doubt of this, after a careful study of the two careers. In judging Dickens's books, too, it must always be remembered that he, as well as Thackeray, was under constant journalistic pressure and did not give his work the shaping forethought, at times, and the revision which a latter

day would demand. His stories were serialized and written with that fact in mind; a regrettable thing, for it sometimes meant undue haste, and the subordination of parts to the whole, which makes for symmetry. It is beyond doubt that Dickens's work suffered in some measure for this reason. Any literary man is to be judged by the standards and conditions of his time, and the generation of these two major Victorian novelists was easy-going in these respects compared with our own. For a large part of his literary life, too, Dickens was the editor of important publications; not an editor who makes a sinecure of his position, but one who really "slogged at his trade," giving fully of his time and strength. He edited *Household Words,* and later *All the Year Round.* That he shaped his own writings to the exigencies of his magazines can not be questioned. A critic who studied the fiction of Dickens in relation to its serial appearance and noted to what extent the author wrought with this necessity before him, would do much service to Dickens's study. The need to arrange climaxes, for example, in such wise as to prove most effective at the end of an instalment, would condition the technic of the story as a whole. Dickens here did what leading authors have prevailingly done; he allowed financial considerations to qualify his artistic ideal. He is to be blamed neither more nor less than the others.

In 1857 Dickens was separated from his wife, the Catherine Hogarth of his early days of friendship with the editor's family. They had lived together nearly a quarter of a century, she had reared a large family and met faithfully and with credit the varied demands made upon her position. The Gadshill ménage had been established in 1857. Here, as in his earlier London residences, Tavistock House and Devonshire Terrace, Mrs. Dickens, with the assistance of her sister, Georgina Hogarth, had made a domestic atmosphere necessary to a man with such keen sympathies and natural household aptitudes as Charles Dickens; that it was a warm, pleasant, hospitable home life is attested by multifarious contemporary participators therein. And in saying this, the curtain may properly be drawn. No scandal known to the world explains the rupture. Forster, the authoritative biographer, is discreet and tactful in his references; later recorders had best imitate him. One deplores Dickens's divorce as a sad incident in his life, and can but leave it in the privacy where it belongs. Dickens himself made a public statement in his magazine which many resented for its lack of reserve, but which the lovers of this great-hearted man, who realize his peculiar feeling of obligation to his audience, can understand and forgive—if forgiveness be called for. For reasons never likely to be known to the general,

the pair were incompatible by the time the author was forty-five years of age, in the prime of middle age.

Two possible results of this domestic unhappiness may be touched upon, however, for the light cast on Dickens's work. *A Tale of Two Cities* is distinguished among his books for the absence of a quality which is our first association with the creator of *Pickwick*. It is a picturesque and powerful romance almost entirely devoid of the humor which is a main characteristic of his other novels, even when, as with *Oliver Twist* or *Martin Chuzzlewit,* they are largely melodramatic and somber. In those and in fact in all the remaining stories, comic characters abound in prodigal plenty. It is significant, therefore, that in *A Tale of Two Cities* they are practically non-existent. When Dickens was writing this striking romance, he was undergoing the strain of the decision which led up to the separation of 1857. The gestation and partial execution of the book belongs to this period. Too much need not be made of this, but that there is some connection is reasonable to assume. The author was in an unusually harassed and wretched state of mind; this is reflected in some of his letters to friends. Why should not such a psychic condition have its effect upon the imaginative work he was then engaged upon? The Rembrandt-like tone of the pic-

ture, and the nobly tragic fate of Sidney Carton may well have been colored by the subjective experiences through which the writer was passing.

The other point has to do with his lecture career. Dickens was the best amateur actor of his time, and when, under pressure from without, he began to read from his works, and found that he had tapped a new gold mine, he thereafter gave too much of his time and strength to the tours in the British Islands and the United States. It deflected him from his true metier of author. I have referred to the criticism, sometimes harsh, which this awoke. It was said that he sacrificed to the great god Mammon and that he was led astray by the popular applause which came to him by this direct contact with the public. Here it may be remarked that a careful scrutiny of his private letters and the testimony of personal friends show plainly enough that his restless, unhappy state, following his domestic upheaval, offers at the least a partial explanation of his willingness to adopt the lecturer's itinerant life, indeed, stirred in him a fevered desire for the excitement of such work. We find him, for example, speaking to his friend, Wilkie Collins, in 1857, the *annus miserabilis,* of his "grim despair and restlessness of this subsidence from excitement," and to the same correspondent the next year, using this highly illuminating language in referring to a reading tour which was under way: "I can

not deny that I shall be heartily glad when it is all over, and that I miss the thoughtfulness of my quiet room and desk. But perhaps it is best for me not to have it just now, and to wear and toss my storm away—or as much of it as will ever calm down while the water rolls—in this restless manner."

It seems beyond a doubt that Dickens's private sorrows entered in these ways into his literary life to affect both his work and the disposition of the years which remained to him after the change in his family affairs.

An important part of Dickens's career as a reader was his American appearance in 1842, and nearly a generation later, in 1867-8. The first time he came as a young man of thirty, the second time as a mature man of six and fifty. The early trip, which was associated with *Martin Chuzzlewit* in that the American scenes in that story draw upon his experiences in the United States, made trouble for him with American readers, because of the sharp satiric strictures passed upon our new civilization, both in the novel and in the *American Notes* which were results of the visit. Looking back upon this from the vantage point of more than half a century, one can be fair to both parties in a controversy which for a time threatened seriously to check the love and admiration felt for the great English writer in this country, not a whit behind England in quick

and hearty appreciation of his genius. As to this frank expression of his opinions, it must be remembered that Dickens was not only a humorist but a satirist, if indeed the one does not of necessity include the other. In presenting the social and economic life of England, with special reference to its abuse and neglect of the lower classes, he had never hesitated to reprimand and excoriate, where he deemed it helpful to do so. He was no cheap flatterer. Similarly, as he began to study our crude manners and institutions in the administration of President Polk, he used the same frankness and freedom of comment and criticism, on the assumption that we Americans would understand he was, so to say, criticizing his own, a part of the English race. Moreover, Dickens at thirty lacked the tact and judgment of a man of fifty; he did not realize how touchy Americans are and always will be at strictures from beyond their own borders, and therefore that it is well to refrain. In this respect, Dickens erred in telling some home truths with his incomparable pen.

But let us also confess that much that he objected to, and laughed at, was open to such attack. Our manners in 1842 as observed among the natives at large were often odious and shocking to refined sensibilities. The raucous voices, the thumb-in-the-armhole swagger, the painted faces of the ladies, the free expectoration of tobacco in surprising

places, the cheap jingoism of the newspapers, and, what particularly incensed the Englishman, the iniquitous lack of international copyright, which enabled unscrupulous publishers to batten off an author like Dickens without paying him a cent in compensation; these things and others equally disagreeable were for the seeing, and to speak of them was a matter of taste rather than of untruth.

It is pleasant to reflect that, long after the smoke of battle had cleared away, and Dickens was receiving the affectionate plaudits of all America during his tour of 1867-8, he made the *amende honorable,* both in public utterance and in the Preface to *Our Mutual Friend,* wherein he set down his regard for this nation and his regret at his early indiscretion. It was a manly, straightforward thing to do, and like him.

Dickens was badly shaken up and nerve-shocked in a railway accident which occurred at Staplehurst on June ninth, 1865, curiously enough the date of his death, five years later. It seems to be a fact that for the remainder of his days he was never quite the same again. His subsequent travels on the railways affected him as they had not done before. "Since the Staplehurst experience I feel them very much," he wrote Collins. This made the wear and tear of the readings the greater, and was perhaps contributory to hastening his end.

The personal relations of Thackeray and Dickens

can not but pique interest. In some sort and naturally rivals, they were for many years, at least externally, upon terms of cordial good feeling. Each spoke handsomely of the other's work, Thackeray especially going out of his way to say generous and praiseful things of Dickens. Few more charming letters exist than that in which Thackeray testifies to the devotion of his young daughters to *Copperfield;* it reminds one of the later and equally charming testimony of Barrie to the effect of Stevenson's writings upon the former's mother, the Margaret Ogilvie of blessed memory. And when Thackeray died, in 1864, Dickens in *Household Words* paid the finest kind of a tribute to his great fellow author. Shortly before Thackeray's passing, a temporary estrangement occurred, owing to a misunderstanding over the admission to The Garrick Club of Edmund Yates. This quarrel, however, was happily cleared up before it was too late.

It would be an exaggeration, nevertheless, to say that the relations of these two Victorian authors were close and warm. For whatever reasons—and it is unnecessary to assume professional jealousy—they were never intimates. In view-point, as men and artists, background of culture, family and class feeling, there were marked differences between them and there is absolutely no reason why the present generation should not accept and enjoy them as contrasted types, whether as individuals or authors,

receiving the pleasure germane to each, and respecting them both as good men who wrought nobly, each according to his nature, and left English literature richer by doing so. It seems foolish, and an uncalled-for curtailment of one's enjoyment, to eschew one of these writers because one affects the other. It is the commonest thing in the world to find among those who care for letters this partisan attitude. The wiser way were to appreciate the fine qualities indubitably possessed by Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray, and not to bother overmuch that their gifts were unlike.

In one of his essays Stevenson prays that he may be spared "the dim tedium of the sick room." Who indeed, were it not for the shock to others, would not prefer to be stricken down in the midst of work, while one's powers are still vigorous and there is no thought of inaction and useless lingering? To Dickens was given such an end. He was always quick, energetic, decisive, a-tiptoe with life, and his death tallied with his character, his nature. On that June day at Gadshill which was to be his last, he spent the morning in his writing chalet, the gift of the actor, Fechter, at work on *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* the unfinished book concerning which the critics have been puzzling their brains ever since to solve its riddle. Then, at dinner he was seized, and by bedtime gone; one of those strokes that fall with terrible unexpectedness upon others, but are merciful to the stricken.

Dickens's will read: "I commit my soul to the mercy of God through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and I exhort my dear children honestly to try and guide themselves by the teachings of the New Testament in its broad spirit and to put no faith in any man's narrow construction of its letter here or there."

It had been the author's wish to be buried simply and privately in Rochester churchyard. But the family yielded to the desire of the British people, expressed through Gladstone, the prime minister, that this man, in the truest sense a public benefactor, should rest in Westminster Abbey, in that Poets' Corner dedicated to the country's great writers, past and present. And so to-day the visitor stands reverently beside the inscription which notes his sepulture; although Thackeray sleeps in Kensal Green, a commemorative bust also is here, associating the two great masters of story-telling who graced the reign of Victoria the Good. During their lives they worked together, each with his vision, to make the world know and understand the English race; and in the Abbey by the Thames's side their names are handed on, as a most honorable legacy, to all folk of English speech. Carlyle, whose tongue was too often censorious of others, spoke these words of Charles Dickens when he was gone: "The good, the gentle, the high-gifted, ever friendly, noble Dickens, every inch of him an honest man." It may suffice for his epitaph.

CHAPTER III

Finding Himself: The Maker of Mirthful Scene and Character

AFTER the tentative work of a young man in his twenties, *Sketches by Boz,* comes the first great book by Charles Dickens, which is affectionately known of men by the abbreviated title, *The Pickwick Papers,* its original naming perhaps revealing more fully the nature of the book: *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club.* There are only a few other titles, such as *Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels, Uncle Tom's Cabin,* equally familiar to those of English speech; no name created by the imagination in any nation is better known than that of Mr. Pickwick. Dickens has caught in him a type to be "understanded of the people"; and equally to be loved. He is so relishable in his reality. We can sympathize with him, admire his fundamental virtues, pity his weaknesses, and always laugh with him in his ever-delightful recognition of the fact that Life, viewed in kindly tolerance and understanding, is a mighty good thing. As Mr. Shaw says, "Mr. Pickwick is the safest saint for us in our nonage." He is built four-square on the

recognizable British traits. He is splendidly sane —even in his foolishness. And that this was done by a young fellow of four and twenty, secured by a publisher to furnish the running text for a series of sporting pictures, is enough to make plain the power of this English story-teller. His contribution was supposed to be entirely secondary; yet he made permanent addition to the pleasurable portrait gallery of letters. It was a feat only to be performed by genius. While no book Dickens was to write during the generation in which he toiled at his task was to be more widely known or better loved, the full man, as human being and artist, was by no means to be revealed in this delightful chronicle of scene and character. The view of life is superficial, the main virtue is in the reporter's quick catching of picturesque, amusing incidents and in his immense animal spirits, along with a keen eye for the foibles of humanity externally observed.

Pickwick appeared in monthly instalments during 1836-7, and on its production in book form the success was immediate, forty thousand copies being sold before the expiration of 1837. The framework of story is slight. Mr. Pickwick and his associates in the celebrated club that bears his name simply journey about rural England with descents upon London and meet with the adventures such sportive gentlemen would encounter. It matters not how slight the story interest: episodes, scenes, characteriza-

tions are the main thing. It all has the charm of chronicle history, like *Tom Jones* in an earlier generation. There is a delightful flavor of the picaresque, and Dickens's debt to Smollett and Fielding —a debt well paid in the use—is manifest.

We might express it succinctly in saying that in this first famous book Dickens demonstrated his genius, but it was the genius of a young man, who naturally saw life externally, and who did not yet show, did not indeed in such a work as *Pickwick* need to show, that he could construct and carry through in an organic way what is called a novel. *Pickwick* is a series of episodes centering in a character. Its fun, which so often comes fast and furious, is of the sort that inheres in men presented in their humors in the older meaning of the word, and caught in situations which in themselves amuse with their lively saliency. Bonhomie is of the very breath of the nostrils of such writing.

In this teeming picture, or series of pictures, are to be found some of the best-known and best-loved of all the creatures imagined by Dickens: Pickwick himself, and those twin begetters of honest, rib-shaking mirth, the Wellers, father and son. It is safe to say that no character has come from the pen of this writer, or better, from his sympathetic spirit, more widely treasured than Sam Weller. Enjoyable as is the elder of that ilk, Sam, Mr. Pickwick's cockney valet, is not only the ten strike of Dickens's

youth, but comes dangerously near leading the long list of comic portraits. We may listen and look as his master engages him as a body servant: Mr. Pickwick has discovered Sam as Boots at the White Hart Inn in London, and being attracted by his quaint good humor, bids him call at the lodgings, where Mrs. Bardell, his estimable landlady, a widow with an eye out for number two, has just sadly misunderstood Mr. Pickwick's entirely innocent attentions. We may have this episode of mistaken courtship, as well as the entrance of the famed Sam, who, once engaged, is to be the inseparable and valued companion of the founder of the Pickwick Club throughout his adventures:

Enter Sam Weller

"Mrs. Bardell," said Mr. Pickwick, at last, as that amiable female approached the termination of a prolonged dusting of the apartment.

"Sir," said Mrs. Bardell.

"Your little boy is a very long time gone."

"Why, it's a good long way to the Borough, sir," remonstrated Mrs. Bardell.

"Ah," said Mr. Pickwick, "very true; so it is."

Mr. Pickwick relapsed into silence, and Mrs. Bardell resumed her dusting.

"Mrs. Bardell," said Mr. Pickwick, at the expiration of a few minutes.

"Sir," said Mrs. Bardell again.

"Do you think it's a much greater expense to keep two people than to keep one?"

"La, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Bardell, colouring up to the very border of her cap, as she fancied she observed a species of matrimonial twinkle in the eyes of her lodger—"la, Mr. Pickwick, what a question!"

"Well, but *do* you?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"That depends"—said Mrs. Bardell, approaching the duster very near to Mr. Pickwick's elbow, which was planted on the table—"that depends a good deal upon the person, you know, Mr. Pickwick; and whether it's a saving and careful person, sir."

"That's very true," said Mr. Pickwick, "but the person I have in my eye" (here he looked very hard at Mrs. Bardell) "I think possesses these qualities; and has, moreover, a considerable knowledge of the world, and a great deal of sharpness, Mrs. Bardell, which may be of material use to me."

"La, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Bardell, the crimson rising to her cap-border again.

"I do," said Mr. Pickwick, growing energetic, as was his wont in speaking of a subject which interested him—"I do, indeed; and to tell you the truth, Mrs. Bardell, I have made up my mind."

"Dear me, sir," exclaimed Mrs. Bardell.

"You'll think it very strange, now," said the ami-

able Mr. Pickwick, with a good-humoured glance at his companion, "that I never consulted you about this matter, and never even mentioned it, till I sent your little boy out this morning—eh?"

Mrs. Bardell could only reply by a glance. She had long worshipped Mr. Pickwick at a distance, but here she was, all at once, raised to a pinnacle to which her wildest and most extravagant hopes had never dared to aspire. Mr. Pickwick was going to propose—a deliberate plan, too—sent her little boy to the Borough, to get him out of the way—how thoughtful—how considerate!

"Well," said Mr. Pickwick, "what do you think?"

"Oh, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Bardell, trembling with agitation, "you're very kind, sir."

"It'll save you a good deal of trouble, won't it?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Oh, I never thought anything of the trouble, sir," replied Mrs. Bardell, "and, of course, I should take more trouble to please you then than ever. But it is so kind of you, Mr. Pickwick, to have so much consideration for my loneliness."

"Ah, to be sure," said Mr. Pickwick, "I never thought of that. When I am in town you'll always have somebody to sit with you. To be sure, so you will."

"I'm sure I ought to be a very happy woman," said Mrs. Bardell.

"And your little boy—" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Bless his heart!" interposed Mrs. Bardell, with a maternal sob.

"He, too, will have a companion," resumed Mr. Pickwick, "a lively one, who'll teach him, I'll be bound, more tricks in a week than he would ever learn in a year." And Mr. Pickwick smiled placidly.

"Oh, you dear—" said Mrs. Bardell.

Mr. Pickwick started.

"Oh, you kind, good, playful dear," said Mrs. Bardell; and without more ado, she rose from her chair, and flung her arms round Mr. Pickwick's neck, with a cataract of tears and a chorus of sobs.

"Bless my soul!" cried the astonished Mr. Pickwick. "Mrs. Bardell, my good woman—dear me, what a situation — pray consider — Mrs. Bardell, don't—if anybody should come—"

"Oh, let them come," exclaimed Mrs. Bardell, frantically; "I'll never leave you—dear, kind, good soul;" and with these words Mrs. Bardell clung the tighter.

"Mercy upon me!" said Mr. Pickwick, struggling violently, "I hear somebody coming up the stairs. Don't, don't, there's a good creature, don't." But entreaty and remonstrance were alike unavailing; for Mrs. Bardell had fainted in Mr. Pickwick's arms; and before he could gain time to deposit her on a chair, Master Bardell entered the room, ushering in Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass.

Mr. Pickwick was struck motionless and speechless. He stood with his lovely burden in his arms, gazing vacantly on the countenances of his friends, without the slightest attempt at recognition or explanation. They, in their turn, stared at him; and Master Bardell, in his turn, stared at everybody.

The astonishment of the Pickwickians was so absorbing, and the perplexity of Mr. Pickwick was so extreme, that they might have remained in exactly the same relative situations until the suspended animation of the lady was restored, had it not been for a most beautiful and touching expression of filial affection on the part of her youthful son. Clad in a tight suit of corduroy, spangled with brass buttons of a very considerable size, he at first stood at the door astounded and uncertain; but by degrees the impression that his mother must have suffered some personal danger pervaded his partially-developed mind, and considering Mr. Pickwick as the aggressor, he set up an appalling and semi-earthly kind of howling, and butting forward with his head, commenced assailing that immortal gentleman about the back and legs, with such blows and pinches as the strength of his arm and the violence of his excitement allowed.

"Take this little villain away," said the agonized Mr. Pickwick; "he's mad."

"What *is* the matter?" said the three tongue-tied Pickwickians.

"I don't know," replied Mr. Pickwick pettishly. "Take away the boy." (Here Mr. Winkle carried the interesting boy, screaming and struggling, to the farther end of the apartment.) "Now, help me, lead this woman downstairs."

"Oh, I am better now," said Mrs. Bardell faintly.

"Let me lead you downstairs," said the ever gallant Mr. Tupman.

"Thank you, sir—thank you," exclaimed Mrs. Bardell, hysterically. And downstairs she was led accordingly, accompanied by her affectionate son.

"I can not conceive," said Mr. Pickwick, when his friend returned—"I can not conceive what has been the matter with that woman. I had merely announced to her my intention of keeping a manservant when she fell into the extraordinary paroxysm in which you found her. Very extraordinary thing."

"Very," said his three friends.

"Placed me in such an extremely awkward situation," continued Mr. Pickwick.

"Very," was the reply of his followers, as they coughed slightly and looked dubiously at each other.

This behaviour was not lost upon Mr. Pickwick. He remarked their incredulity. They evidently suspected him.

"There is a man in the passage now," said Mr. Tupman.

"It's the man I spoke to you about," said Mr.

Pickwick; "I sent for him to the Borough this morning. — Have the goodness to call him up, Snodgrass."

Mr. Snodgrass did as he was desired; and Mr. Samuel Weller forthwith presented himself.

"Oh—you remember me, I suppose?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"I should think so," replied Sam, with a patronizing wink. "Queer start that 'ere, but he was one too many for you, warn't he? Up to snuff, and a pinch or two over—eh?"

"Never mind that matter now," said Mr. Pickwick, hastily. "I want to speak to you about something else. Sit down."

"Thank'ee, sir," said Sam. And down he sat without further bidding, having previously deposited his old white hat on the landing outside the door. "Tan't a wery good 'un to look at," said Sam, "but it's an astonishin' 'un to wear; and afore the brim went, it was a wery handsome tile. Hows'ever, it's lighter without it, that's one thing; and every hole lets in some air, that's another—ventilation gossamer, I calls it." On the delivery of this sentiment, Mr. Weller smiled agreeably upon the assembled Pickwickians.

"Now with regard to the matter on which I, with the concurrence of these gentlemen, sent for you," said Mr. Pickwick.

"That's the pint, sir," interposed Sam; "out vith

it, as the father said to the child when he swallowed a farden."

"We want to know, in the first place," said Mr. Pickwick, "whether you have any reason to be discontented with your present situation."

"Afore I answers that 'ere question, gen'l'm'n," replied Mr. Weller, "*I* should like to know, in the first place, whether you're a-goin' to purwide me with a better."

A sunbeam of placid benevolence played on Mr. Pickwick's features as he said, "I have half made up my mind to engage you myself."

"Have you, though?" said Sam.

Mr. Pickwick nodded in the affirmative.

"Wages?" inquired Sam.

"Twelve pounds a year," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Clothes?"

"Two suits."

"Work?"

"To attend upon me, and travel about with me and these gentlemen here."

"Take the bill down," said Sam emphatically. "I'm let to a single gentleman, and the terms is agreed upon."

"You accept the situation?" asked Mr. Pickwick.

"Cert'nly," replied Sam. "If the clothes fits me half as well as the place, they'll do."

"You can get a character, of course?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Ask the landlady o' the White Hart about that, sir," replied Sam.

"Can you come this evening?"

"I'll get into the clothes this minute, if they're here," said Sam, with great alacrity.

"Call at eight this evening," said Mr. Pickwick, "and if the inquiries are satisfactory, they shall be provided."

With the single exception of one amiable indiscretion, in which an assistant housemaid had equally participated, the history of Mr. Weller's conduct was so very blameless that Mr. Pickwick felt fully justified in closing the engagement that very evening. With the promptness and energy which characterized not only the public proceedings, but all the private actions of this extraordinary man, he at once led his new attendant to one of those convenient emporiums where gentlemen's new and second-hand clothes are provided, and the troublesome and inconvenient formality of measurement dispensed with; and before night had closed in, Mr. Weller was furnished with a grey coat with the P. C. button, a black hat with a cockade to it, a pink striped waistcoat, light breeches and gaiters, and a variety of other necessaries, too numerous to recapitulate.

"Well," said that suddenly-transformed individual, as he took his seat on the outside of the Eatanswill coach next morning; "I wonder whether I'm

meant to be a footman, or a groom, or a gamekeeper, or a seedman. I looks like a sort of compo of every one on 'em. Never mind; there's change of air, plenty to see, and little to do; and all this suits my complaint uncommon; so long life to the Pickvicks, says I!"

But the elder Mr. Weller, an inimitable portrait of the old-time coachman with his slow speech, savory wisdom and poor opinion of widows, must also surely be presented:

The Elder Weller

The room was one of a very homely description, and was apparently under the especial patronage of stage coachmen; for several gentlemen, who had all the appearance of belonging to that learned profession, were drinking and smoking in the different boxes. Among the number was one stout, red-faced elderly man in particular, seated in an opposite box, who attracted Mr. Pickwick's attention. The stout man was smoking with great vehemence, but between every half-dozen puffs he took his pipe from his mouth, and looked first at Mr. Weller and then at Mr. Pickwick. Then he would bury in a quart pot as much of his countenance as the dimensions of the quart pot admitted of its receiving, and took another look at Sam and Mr. Pickwick. Then he

would take another half-dozen puffs with an air of profound meditation and look at them again. At last the stout man, putting up his legs on the seat, and leaning his back against the wall, began to puff at his pipe without leaving off at all, and to stare through the smoke at the new-comers, as if he had made up his mind to see the most he could of them.

At first the evolutions of the stout man had escaped Mr. Weller's observation, but by degrees, as he saw Mr. Pickwick's eyes every now and then turning towards him, he began to gaze in the same direction, at the same time shading his eyes with his hand, as if he partially recognized the object before him, and wished to make quite sure of its identity. His doubts were speedily dispelled, however; for the stout man having blown a thick cloud from his pipe, a hoarse voice, like some strange effort of ventriloquism, emerged from beneath the capacious shawls which muffled his throat and chest, and slowly uttered these sounds—"Wy, Sammy!"

"Who's that, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Why, I wouldn't ha' believed it, sir," replied Mr. Weller, with astonished eyes. "It's the old 'un."

"Old one," said Mr. Pickwick, "what old one?"

"My father, sir," replied Mr. Weller.—"How are you, my ancient?" With which beautiful ebullition of filial affection Mr. Weller made room on the seat beside him for the stout man, who advanced, pipe in mouth and pot in hand, to greet him.

"Wy, Sammy," said the father, "I han't seen you for two year and better."

"Nor more you have, old codger," replied the son. "How's mother-in-law?"

"Wy, I'll tell you what, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, senior, with much solemnity in his manner; "there never was a nicer woman as a widder than that 'ere second wentur o' mine—a sweet creetur she was, Sammy; all I can say on her now is, that as she was such an uncommon pleasant widder, it's a great pity she ever changed her con-dition. She don't act as a wife, Sammy."

"Don't she, though?" inquired Mr. Weller, junior.

The elder Mr. Weller shook his head, as he replied with a sigh, "I've done it once too often, Sammy; I've done it once too often. Take example by your father, my boy, and be wery careful o' widders all your life, specially if they've kept a public-house, Sammy." Having delivered this parental advice with great pathos, Mr. Weller, senior, refilled his pipe from a tin box he carried in his pocket, and lighting his fresh pipe from the ashes of the old one, commenced smoking at a great rate.

"Beg your pardon, sir," he said, renewing the subject, and addressing Mr. Pickwick, after a considerable pause, "nothin' personal, I hope, sir; I hope you han't got a widder, sir."

"Not I," replied Mr. Pickwick, laughing; and

while Mr. Pickwick laughed, Sam Weller informed his parent, in a whisper, of the relation in which he stood towards that gentleman.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said Mr. Weller, senior, taking off his hat, "I hope you've no fault to find with Sammy, sir?"

"None whatever," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Wery glad to hear it, sir," replied the old man. "I took a good deal o' pains with his eddication, sir; let him run the streets when he was wery young, and shift for hisself. It's the only way to make a boy sharp, sir."

"Rather a dangerous process, I should imagine," said Mr. Pickwick, with a smile.

"And not a wery sure one, neither," added Mr. Weller; "I got reg'larly done the other day."

"No!" said the father.

"I did," said the son; and he proceeded to relate, in as few words as possible, how he had fallen a ready dupe to the stratagems of Job Trotter.

Mr. Weller, senior, listened to the tale with the most profound attention, and at its termination said,—

"Worn't one o' these chaps slim and tall, with long hair, and the gift o' the gab wery gallopin'?"

Mr. Pickwick did not quite understand the last item of description, but comprehending the first, said "Yes" at a venture.

"T'other's a black-haired chap in mulberry livery, with a wery large head?"

"Yes, yes, he is," said Mr. Pickwick and Sam, with great earnestness.

"Then I know where they are, and that's all about it," said Mr. Weller; "they're at Ipswich, safe enough, them two."

"No!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Fact," said Mr. Weller, "and I'll tell you how I know it. I work on Ipswich coach now and then for a friend o' mine. I worked down the wery day arter the night as you caught the rheumatiz, and at the Black Boy at Chelmsford—the wery place they'd come to—I took 'em up, right through to Ipswich, where the man-servant—him in the mulberries—told me they was a-goin' to put up for a long time."

"I'll follow him," said Mr. Pickwick; "we may as well see Ipswich as any other place. I'll follow him."

"You're quite certain it was them, governor?" inquired Mr. Weller, junior.

"Quite, Sammy, quite," replied his father, "for their appearance is wery sing'ler: besides that 'ere, I wondered to see the gen'l'm'n so formiliar with his servant; and more than that, as they sat in front, right behind the box, I heerd 'em laughing, and saying how they'd done old Fireworks."

"Old who?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Old Fireworks, sir; by which I've no doubt they meant you, sir."

There is nothing positively vile or atrocious in the appellation of "old Fireworks," but still it is by no means a respectful or flattering designation. The recollection of all the wrongs he had sustained at Jingle's hands had crowded on Mr. Pickwick's mind the moment Mr. Weller began to speak: it wanted but a feather to turn the scale, and "old Fireworks" did it.

"I'll follow him," said Mr. Pickwick, with an emphatic blow on the table.

"I shall work down to Ipswich the day arter tomorrow, sir," said Mr. Weller the elder, "from the Bull in Whitechapel; and if you really mean to go, you'd better go with me."

"So we had," said Mr. Pickwick; "very true. I can write to Bury, and tell them to meet me at Ipswich. We will go with you. But don't hurry away, Mr. Weller; won't you take anything?"

"You're wery good, sir," replied Mr. W., stopping short; "perhaps a small glass of brandy to drink your health, and success to Sammy, sir, wouldn't be amiss."

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Pickwick.—"A glass of brandy here!" The brandy was brought; and Mr. Weller, after pulling his hair to Mr. Pickwick and nodding to Sam, jerked it down his capacious throat as if it had been a small thimbleful.

"Well done, father," said Sam; "take care, old fellow, or you'll have a touch of your old complaint, the gout."

"I've found a sov'rin' cure for that, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller, setting down the glass.

"A sovereign cure for the gout," said Mr. Pickwick, hastily producing his note-book—"what is it?"

"The gout, sir," replied Mr. Weller—"the gout is a complaint as arises from too much ease and comfort. If ever you're attacked with the gout, sir, jist you marry a widder as has got a good loud woice, with a decent notion of usin' it, and you'll never have the gout agin. It's a capital prescription, sir. I takes it reg'lar, and I can warrant it to drive away any illness as is caused by too much jollity." Having imparted this valuable secret, Mr. Weller drained his glass once more, produced a laboured wink, sighed deeply, and slowly retired.

"Well, what do you think of what your father says, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, with a smile.

"Think, sir!" replied Mr. Weller; "why, I think he's the wictim o' connubiality, as Blue Beard's domestic chaplain said, with a tear of pity, ven he buried him."

The stern sequence of Mr. Pickwick's kindness to his landlady is the court scene in the memorable trial of Bardell against Pickwick:

Bardell vs. Pickwick

The judge had no sooner taken his seat, than the officer on the floor of the court called out "Silence!" in a commanding tone, upon which another officer in the gallery cried "Silence!" in an angry manner, whereupon three or four more ushers shouted "Silence!" in a voice of indignant remonstrance. This being done, a gentleman in black, who sat below the judge, proceeded to call over the names of the jury; and after a great deal of bawling, it was discovered that only ten special jurymen were present. Upon this, Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz prayed a *tales;* the gentleman in black then proceeded to press into the special jury two of the common jurymen; and a green-grocer and a chemist were caught directly.

"Answer to your names, gentlemen, that you may be sworn," said the gentleman in black. "Richard Upwitch."

"Here," said the green-grocer.

"Thomas Groffin."

"Here," said the chemist.

"Take the book, gentlemen. You shall well and truly try—"

"I beg this court's pardon," said the chemist, who was a tall, thin, yellow-visaged man, "but I hope this court will excuse my attendance."

"On what grounds, sir?" said Mr. Justice Stareleigh.

"I have no assistant, my Lord," said the chemist.

"I can't help that, sir," replied Mr. Justice Stareleigh. "You should hire one."

"I can't afford it, my Lord," rejoined the chemist.

"Then you ought to be able to afford it, sir," said the judge, reddening; for Mr. Justice Stareleigh's temper bordered on the irritable, and brooked not contradiction.

"I know I ought to do, if I got on as well as I deserved, but I don't, my Lord," answered the chemist.

"Swear the gentleman," said the judge, peremptorily.

The officer had got no further than the "You shall well and truly try," when he was again interrupted by the chemist.

"I am to be sworn, my Lord, am I?" said the chemist.

"Certainly, sir," replied the testy little judge.

"Very well, my Lord," replied the chemist, in a resigned manner. "Then there'll be murder before this trial's over; that's all. Swear me, if you please, sir;" and sworn the chemist was, before the judge could find words to utter.

"I merely wanted to observe, my Lord," said the chemist, taking his seat with great deliberation, "that I've left nobody but an errand-boy in my shop. He is a very nice boy, my Lord, but he is not acquainted with drugs; and I know that the pre-

vailing impression on his mind is, that Epsom salts means oxalic acid; and syrup of senna, laudanum. That's all, my Lord." With this, the tall chemist composed himself into a comfortable attitude, and, assuming a pleasant expression of countenance, appeared to have prepared himself for the worst.

Mr. Pickwick was regarding the chemist with feelings of the deepest horror, when a slight sensation was perceptible in the body of the court; and immediately afterwards Mrs. Bardell, supported by Mrs. Cluppins, was led in, and placed, in a drooping state, at the other end of the seat on which Mr. Pickwick sat. An extra sized umbrella was then handed in by Mr. Dodson, and a pair of pattens by Mr. Fogg, each of whom had prepared a most sympathising and melancholy face for the occasion. Mrs. Sanders then appeared, leading in Master Bardell. At sight of her child, Mrs. Bardell started; suddenly recollecting herself, she kissed him in a frantic manner; then relapsing into a state of hysterical imbecility, the good lady requested to be informed where she was. In reply to this, Mrs. Cluppins and Mrs. Sanders turned their heads away and wept, while Messrs. Dodson and Fogg intreated the plaintiff to compose herself. Serjeant Buzfuz rubbed his eyes very hard with a large white handkerchief, and gave an appealing look towards the jury, while the judge was visibly affected, and sev-

eral of the beholders tried to cough down their emotions.

"Very good notion that, indeed," whispered Perker to Mr. Pickwick. "Capital fellows, those, Dodson and Fogg; excellent ideas of effect, my dear sir, excellent."

As Perker spoke, Mrs. Bardell began to recover by slow degrees, while Mrs. Cluppins, after a careful survey of Master Bardell's buttons and the button-holes to which they severally belonged, placed him on the floor of the court in front of his mother, —a commanding position in which he could not fail to awaken the full commiseration and sympathy of both judge and jury. This was not done without considerable opposition, and many tears, on the part of the young gentleman himself, who had certain inward misgivings that the placing him within the full glare of the judge's eye was only a formal prelude to his being immediately ordered away for instant execution, or for transportation beyond the seas, during the whole term of his natural life, at the very least.

"Bardell and Pickwick," cried the gentleman in black, calling on the case, which stood first on the list.

"I am for the plaintiff, my Lord," said Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz.

"Who is with you, brother Buzfuz?" said the

judge. Mr. Skimpin bowed, to intimate that he was.

"I appear for the defendant, my Lord," said Mr. Serjeant Snubbin.

"Anybody with you, brother Snubbin?" inquired the court.

"Mr. Phunky, my Lord," replied Serjeant Snubbin.

"Serjeant Buzfuz and Mr. Skimpin for the plaintiff," said the judge, writing down the names in his note-book, and reading as he wrote; "for the defendant, Serjeant Snubbin and Mr. Monkey."

"Beg your Lordship's pardon, Phunky."

"Oh, very good," said the judge; "I never had the pleasure of hearing the gentleman's name before." Here Mr. Phunky bowed and smiled, and the judge bowed and smiled too, and then Mr. Phunky, blushing into the very whites of his eyes, tried to look as if he didn't know that everybody was gazing at him: a thing which no man ever succeeded in doing yet, or in all reasonable probability, ever will.

"Go on," said the judge.

The ushers again called silence, and Mr. Skimpin proceeded to "open the case"; and the case appeared to have very little inside it when he had opened it, for he kept such particulars as he knew completely to himself, and sat down, after a lapse of three minutes, leaving the jury in precisely the same advanced stage of wisdom as they were in before.

Serjeant Buzfuz then rose with all the majesty and dignity which the grave nature of the proceedings demanded, and having whispered to Dodson, and conferred briefly with Fogg, pulled his gown over his shoulders, settled his wig, and addressed the jury.

Serjeant Buzfuz began by saying, that never, in the whole course of his professional experience—never, from the very first moment of his applying himself to the study and practice of the law—had he approached a case with feelings of such deep emotion, or with such a heavy sense of the responsibility imposed upon him — a responsibility, he would say, which he could never have supported, were he not buoyed up and sustained by a conviction so strong, that it amounted to positive certainty that the cause of truth and justice, or, in other words, the cause of his much-injured and most oppressed client, must prevail with the high-minded and intelligent dozen of men whom he now saw in that box before him.

Counsel usually begin in this way, because it puts the jury on the very best terms with themselves, and makes them think what sharp fellows they must be. A visible effect was produced immediately; several jurymen beginning to take voluminous notes with the utmost eagerness.

"You have heard from my learned friend, gentlemen," continued Serjeant Buzfuz, well knowing

that, from the learned friend alluded to, the gentlemen of the jury had heard just nothing at all—"you have heard from my learned friend, gentlemen, that this is an action for a breach of promise of marriage, in which the damages are laid at fifteen hundred pounds. But you have not heard from my learned friend, inasmuch as it did not come within my learned friend's province to tell you, what are the facts and circumstances of the case. Those facts and circumstances, gentlemen, you shall hear detailed by me, and proved by the unimpeachable female whom I will place in that box before you."

Here Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz, with a tremendous emphasis on the word "box," smote his table with a mighty sound, and glanced at Dodson and Fogg, who nodded admiration of the serjeant, and indignant defiance of the defendant.

"The plaintiff, gentlemen," continued Serjeant Buzfuz, in a soft and melancholy voice, "the plaintiff is a widow; yes, gentlemen, a widow. The late Mr. Bardell, after enjoying, for many years, the esteem and confidence of his sovereign, as one of the guardians of his royal revenues, glided almost imperceptibly from the world, to seek elsewhere for that repose and peace which a custom-house can never afford."

At this pathetic description of the decease of Mr. Bardell, who had been knocked on the head with a

quart-pot in a public-house cellar, the learned serjeant's voice faltered, and he proceeded with emotion:

"Some time before his death, he had stamped his likeness upon a little boy. With this little boy, the only pledge of her departed exciseman, Mrs. Bardell shrunk from the world, and courted the retirement and tranquillity of Goswell Street; and here she placed in her front parlour-window a written placard, bearing this inscription—'Apartments furnished for a single gentleman. Inquire within.'" Here Serjeant Buzfuz paused, while several gentlemen of the jury took a note of the document.

"There is no date to that, is there, sir?" inquired a juror.

"There is no date, gentlemen," replied Serjeant Buzfuz; "but I am instructed to say that it was put in the plaintiff's parlour-window just this time three years. I intreat the attention of the jury to the wording of this document. 'Apartments furnished for a single gentleman!' Mrs. Bardell's opinions of the opposite sex, gentlemen, were derived from a long contemplation of the inestimable qualities of her lost husband. She had no fear, she had no distrust, she had no suspicion, all was confidence and reliance. 'Mr. Bardell,' said the widow; 'Mr. Bardell was a man of honour, Mr. Bardell was a man of his word, Mr. Bardell was no deceiver, Mr. Bardell was once a single gentleman himself; *to*

single gentlemen I look for protection, for assistance, for comfort, and for consolation; *in* single gentlemen I shall perpetually see something to remind me of what Mr. Bardell was when he first won my young and untried affections; to a single gentleman, then, shall my lodgings be let.' Actuated by this beautiful and touching impulse (among the best impulses of our imperfect nature, gentlemen,) the lonely and desolate widow dried her tears, furnished her first floor, caught the innocent boy to her maternal bosom, and put the bill up in her parlour-window. Did it remain there long? No. The serpent was on the watch, the train was laid, the mine was preparing, the sapper and miner was at work. Before the bill had been in the parlour-window three days — three days — gentlemen, a Being, erect upon two legs, and bearing all the outward semblance of a man, and not of a monster, knocked at the door of Mrs. Bardell's house. He inquired within; he took the lodgings; and on the very next day he entered into possession of them. This man was Pickwick—Pickwick, the defendant."

Serjeant Buzfuz, who had proceeded with such volubility that his face was perfectly crimson, here paused for breath. The silence awoke Mr. Justice Stareleigh, who immediately wrote down something with a pen without any ink in it, and looked unusually profound, to impress the jury with the belief

that he always thought most deeply with his eyes shut. Serjeant Buzfuz proceeded.

"Of this man Pickwick, I will say little; the subject presents but few attractions; and I, gentlemen, am not the man, nor are you, gentlemen, the men, to delight in the contemplation of revolting heartlessness, and of systematic villainy."

Here Mr. Pickwick, who had been writhing in silence for some time, gave a violent start, as if some vague idea of assaulting Serjeant Buzfuz, in the august presence of justice and law, suggested itself to his mind. An admonitory gesture from Perker restrained him, and he listened to the learned gentleman's continuation with a look of indignation, which contrasted forcibly with the admiring faces of Mrs. Cluppins and Mrs. Sanders.

"I say systematic villainy, gentlemen," said Serjeant Buzfuz, looking through Mr. Pickwick, and talking *at* him; "and when I say systematic villainy, let me tell the defendant Pickwick, if he be in court, as I am informed he is, that it would have been more decent in him, more becoming, in better judgment, and in better taste, if he had stopped away. Let me tell him, gentlemen, that any gestures of dissent or disapprobation in which he may indulge in this court will not go down with you; that you will know how to value and how to appreciate them; and let me tell him further, as my Lord will tell you, gentlemen, that a counsel, in the discharge of his duty

to his client, is neither to be intimidated, nor bullied, nor put down; and that any attempt to do either the one or the other, or the first, or the last, will recoil on the head of the attempter, be he plaintiff or be he defendant, be his name Pickwick, or Noakes, or Stoakes, or Stiles, or Brown, or Thompson."

This little divergence from the subject in hand, had, of course, the intended effect of turning all eyes to Mr. Pickwick. Serjeant Buzfuz, having partially recovered from the state of moral elevation into which he had lashed himself, resumed:

"I shall show you, gentlemen, that for two years Pickwick continued to reside constantly, and without interruption or intermission, at Mrs. Bardell's house. I shall show you that Mrs. Bardell, during the whole of that time waited on him, attended to his comforts, cooked his meals, looked out his linen for the washerwoman when it went abroad, darned, aired, and prepared it for wear, when it came home, and, in short, enjoyed his fullest trust and confidence. I shall show you that, on many occasions, he gave halfpence, and on some occasions even sixpence, to her little boy; and I shall prove to you, by a witness whose testimony it will be impossible for my learned friend to weaken or controvert, that on one occasion he patted the boy on the head, and, after inquiring whether he had won any *alley tors* or *commoneys* lately (both of which I understand

to be a particular species of marbles much prized by the youth of this town), made use of this remarkable expression: 'How should you like to have another father?' I shall prove to you, gentlemen, that about a year ago, Pickwick suddenly began to absent himself from home, during long intervals, as if with the intention of gradually breaking off from my client; but I shall show you also, that his resolution was not at that time sufficiently strong, or that his better feelings conquered, if better feelings he has, or that the charms and accomplishments of my client prevailed against his unmanly intentions; by proving to you, that on one occasion, when he returned from the country, he distinctly and in terms, offered her marriage; previously, however, taking special care that there should be no witness to their solemn contract; and I am in a situation to prove to you, on the testimony of three of his own friends,—most unwilling witnesses, gentlemen —most unwilling witnesses—that on that morning he was discovered by them holding the plaintiff in his arms, and soothing her agitation by his caresses and endearments."

A visible impression was produced upon the auditors by this part of the learned serjeant's address. Drawing forth two very small scraps of paper, he proceeded:

"And now, gentlemen, but one word more. Two letters have passed between these parties, letters

which are admitted to be in the handwriting of the defendant, and which speak volumes indeed. These letters, too, bespeak the character of the man. They are not open, fervent, eloquent epistles, breathing nothing but the language of affectionate attachment. They are covert, sly, underhanded communications, but, fortunately, far more conclusive than if couched in the most glowing language and the most poetic imagery—letters that must be viewed with a cautious and suspicious eye—letters that were evidently intended at the time, by Pickwick, to mislead and delude any third parties into whose hands they might fall. Let me read the first: 'Garraway's, twelve o'clock. Dear Mrs. B.—Chops and Tomato sauce. Yours, Pickwick.' Gentlemen, what does this mean? Chops and Tomato sauce! Yours, Pickwick! Chops! Gracious heavens! and Tomato sauce! Gentlemen, is the happiness of a sensitive and confiding female to be trifled away, by such shallow artifices as these? The next has no date whatever, which is in itself suspicious. 'Dear Mrs. B., I shall not be at home till to-morrow. Slow coach.' And then follows this very remarkable expression. 'Don't trouble yourself about the warming-pan.' The warming-pan! Why, gentlemen, who *does* trouble himself about a warming-pan? When was the peace of mind of man or woman broken or disturbed by a warming-pan, which is in itself a harmless, a useful, and I will add, gentlemen, a

comforting article of domestic furniture? Why is Mrs. Bardell so earnestly entreated not to agitate herself about this warming-pan, unless (as is no doubt the case) it is a mere cover for hidden fire—a mere substitute for some endearing word or promise, agreeably to a preconcerted system of correspondence, artfully contrived by Pickwick with a view to his contemplated desertion, and which I am not in a condition to explain? And what does this allusion to the slow coach mean? For aught I know, it may be a reference to Pickwick himself, who has most unquestionably been a criminally slow coach during the whole of this transaction, but whose speed will now be very unexpectedly accelerated, and whose wheels, gentlemen, as he will find to his cost, will very soon be greased by you!"

Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz paused in this place, to see whether the jury smiled at his joke; but as nobody took it except the green-grocer, whose sensitiveness on the subject was very probably occasioned by his having subjected a chaise-cart to the process in question on that identical morning, the learned serjeant considered it advisable to undergo a slight relapse into the dismals before he concluded.

"But enough of this, gentlemen," said Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz, "it is difficult to smile with an aching heart; it is ill jesting when our deepest sympathies are awakened. My client's hopes and prospects are ruined, and it is no figure of speech to say that her

occupation is gone indeed. The bill is down—but there is no tenant. Eligible single gentlemen pass and repass—but there is no invitation for them to inquire within or without. All is gloom and silence in the house; even the voice of the child is hushed; his infant sports are disregarded when his mother weeps; his 'alley tors' and his 'commoneys' are alike neglected; he forgets the long familiar cry of 'knuckle down,' and at tip-cheese, or odd and even, his hand is out. But Pickwick, gentlemen, Pickwick, the ruthless destroyer of this domestic oasis in the desert of Goswell Street—Pickwick, who has choked up the well, and thrown ashes on the sward —Pickwick, who comes before you to-day with his heartless Tomato sauce and warming-pans—Pickwick still rears his head with unblushing effrontery, and gazes without a sigh on the ruin he has made. Damages, gentlemen—heavy damages—is the only punishment with which you can visit him; the only recompence you can award to my client. And for those damages she now appeals to an enlightened, a high-minded, a right-feeling, a conscientious, a dispassionate, a sympathising, a contemplative jury of her civilized countrymen." With this beautiful peroration, Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz sat down, and Mr. Justice Stareleigh woke up.

These Pickwick extracts will serve to illustrate the young Dickens's talent alike for scene and char-

acter, with the accompanying gift of unforced, bubbling fun which come out of the scene with its contact or conflict of personalities as naturally as water rises to its source. The more mature writer added to the fun that came so fast and furious the deeper notes of pathos and mellow dramatic power.

CHAPTER IV

Early Novels

FOLLOWING *Pickwick,* which, as we have noted, is not a novel at all, came a group of stories standing for Dickens's attempts at fiction in the novel form during the period of his life when he was learning the technic of his craft. Judged purely as art, these pieces of fiction plainly show one gradually feeling his way to mastery. But judged by creative energy, gift of characterization and the *vis comica* for which he is famed, they are hardly inferior to the books of full maturity, like *Copperfield* or *Great Expectations.* Regarded as organic structural compositions, the gain in the later fiction is unquestionable; the author worked hard at his task of perfecting himself in the art of his election. One has only to read Forster's *Life* to see how true this is.

Nevertheless, such fiction as *Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge* will help to pass their maker's reputation down to a later generation. And the quotations from Dickens, a method of demonstrating what

manner of man he was out of his own mouth, were incomplete, did they not include extracts from several of these early works.

OLIVER TWIST

Oliver Twist not only contains some of the author's most familiar and endearing characters—all the world knows Bill Sikes and Nancy, Fagin and the Artful Dodger, Noah Claypole and Charlotte, and Mr. Bumble, the beadle—but it was an early illustration of Dickens's social sympathy and of his desire so to present the life of both the abused poor and the criminal at large as to give a truer basis for their right handling by philanthropy and reform. The book is notably dramatic in method and abounds in that manipulation of chiaroscuro which is one of this master's gifts. The construction is loose, however, the method episodic, and the moral which centers in little Oliver himself didactically conveyed; beyond question, the story is strongest in its humorous treatment of rascaldom.

The Burglary

(Oliver Twist, a workhouse ward, has fallen into the hands of a gang of thieves and is here being used by them to help in the burglary of a private house.)

When Oliver awoke in the morning, he was a good deal surprised to find that a new pair of shoes, with strong thick soles, had been placed at his bedside, and that his old ones had been removed. At first he was pleased with the discovery, hoping that it might be the forerunner of his release; but such thoughts were quickly dispelled on his sitting down to breakfast along with the Jew, who told him, in a tone and manner which increased his alarm, that he was to be taken to the residence of Bill Sikes that night.

"To — to — stop there, sir?" asked Oliver anxiously.

"No, no, my dear; not to stop there," replied the Jew. "We wouldn't like to lose you. Don't be afraid, Oliver, you shall come back to us again. Ha! ha! ha! We won't be so cruel as to send you away, my dear. Oh, no, no!"

The old man, who was stooping over the fire toasting a piece of bread, looked round as he bantered Oliver thus, and chuckled, as if to show that he knew he would still be very glad to get away if he could.

"I suppose," said the Jew, fixing his eyes on Oliver, "you want to know what you're going to Bill's for—eh, my dear?"

Oliver coloured, involuntarily, to find that the old thief had been reading his thoughts; but boldly said, Yes, he did want to know.

"Why, do you think?" inquired Fagin, parrying the question.

"Indeed, I don't know, sir," replied Oliver.

"Bah!" said the Jew, turning away with a disappointed countenance from a close perusal of the boy's face. "Wait till Bill tells you, then."

The Jew seemed much vexed by Oliver's not expressing any greater curiosity on the subject; but the truth is, that although he felt very anxious, he was too much confused by the earnest cunning of Fagin's looks, and his own speculations, to make any further inquiries just then. He had no other opportunity; for the Jew remained very surly and silent till night, when he prepared to go abroad.

"You may burn a candle," said the Jew, putting one upon the table. "And here's a book for you to read, till they come to fetch you. Good-night."

"Good-night!" replied Oliver softly.

The Jew walked to the door, looking over his shoulder at the boy as he went. Suddenly stopping, he called him by his name.

Oliver looked up, and the Jew, pointing to the candle, motioned him to light it. He did so; and as he placed the candlestick upon the table, saw that the Jew was gazing fixedly at him, with lowering and contracted brows, from the dark end of the room.

"Take heed, Oliver, take heed!" said the old man, shaking his right hand before him in a warning

manner. "He's a rough man, and thinks nothing of blood when his own is up. Whatever falls out, say nothing; and do what he bids you. Mind!" Placing a strong emphasis on the last words, he suffered his features gradually to resolve themselves into a ghastly grin, and, nodding his head, left the room.

Oliver leaned his head upon his hand when the old man disappeared, and pondered, with a trembling heart, on the words he had just heard. The more he thought of the Jew's admonition, the more he was at a loss to divine its real purpose and meaning. He could think of no bad object to be attained by sending him to Sikes, which would not be equally well answered by his remaining with Fagin; and after meditating for a long time, concluded that he had been selected to perform some ordinary menial offices for the housebreaker, until another boy, better suited for his purpose, could be engaged. He was too well accustomed to suffering, and had suffered too much where he was, to bewail the prospect of change very severely. He remained lost in thought for some minutes; and then, with a heavy sigh, snuffed the candle, and taking up the book which the Jew had left him, began to read.

He turned over the leaves—carelessly at first; but, lighting on a passage which attracted his attention, he soon became intent upon the volume. It was a history of the lives and trials of great

criminals, and the pages were soiled and thumbed with use. Here he read of dreadful crimes that made the blood run cold—of secret murders that had been committed by the lonely wayside, and bodies hidden from the eye of man in deep pits and wells, which would not keep them down, deep as they were, but had yielded them up at last, after many years, and so maddened the murderers with the sight that in their horror they had confessed their guilt, and yelled for the gibbet to end their agony. Here, too, he read of men who, lying in their beds at dead of night, had been tempted (as they said) and led on, by their own bad thoughts, to such dreadful bloodshed as it made the flesh creep and the limbs quail to think of. The terrible descriptions were so real and vivid that the sallow pages seemed to turn red with gore, and the words upon them to be sounded in his ears as if they were whispered, in hollow murmurs, by the spirits of the dead.

In a paroxysm of fear the boy closed the book, and thrust it from him. Then, falling upon his knees, he prayed Heaven to spare him from such deeds, and rather to will that he should die at once than be reserved for crimes so fearful and appalling. By degrees he grew more calm, and besought, in a low and broken voice, that he might be rescued from his present dangers; and that if any aid were to be raised up for a poor outcast boy, who had

never known the love of friends or kindred, it might come to him now, when, desolate and deserted, he stood alone in the midst of wickedness and guilt.

He had concluded his prayer, but still remained with his head buried in his hands, when a rustling noise aroused him.

"What's that?" he cried, starting up, and catching sight of a figure standing by the door. "Who's there?"

"Me—only me," replied a tremulous voice.

Oliver raised the candle above his head, and looked towards the door. It was Nancy.

"Put down the light," said the girl, turning away her head. "It hurts my eyes."

Oliver saw that the girl was very pale, and gently inquired if she were ill. The girl threw herself into a chair, with her back towards him, and wrung her hands, but made no reply.

"God forgive me!" she cried after a while; "I never thought of this."

"Has anything happened?" asked Oliver. "Can I help you? I will if I can. I will, indeed."

She rocked herself to and fro, caught her throat, and, uttering a gurgling sound, struggled and gasped for breath.

"Nancy!" cried Oliver, "what is it?"

The girl beat her hands upon her knees, and her feet upon the ground, and, suddenly stopping, drew her shawl close around her, and shivered with cold.

Oliver stirred the fire. Drawing her chair close to it, she sat there, for a little time, without speaking; but at length she raised her head, and looked round.

"I don't know what comes over me sometimes," said she, affecting to busy herself in arranging her dress; "it's this damp, dirty room, I think. Now, Nolly, dear, are you ready?"

"Am I to go with you?" asked Oliver.

"Yes; I have come from Bill," replied the girl. "You are to go with me."

"What for?" said Oliver, recoiling.

"What for?" echoed the girl, raising her eyes, and averting them again the moment they encountered the boy's face. "Oh, for no harm."

"I don't believe it," said Oliver, who had watched her closely.

"Have it your own way," rejoined the girl, affecting to laugh. "For no good, then."

Oliver could see that he had some power over the girl's better feelings, and, for an instant, thought of appealing to her compassion for his helpless state. But then, the thought darted across his mind that it was barely eleven o'clock, and that many people were still in the street, of whom surely some might be found to give credence to his tale. As the reflection occurred to him, he stepped forward and said, somewhat hastily, that he was ready.

Neither his brief consideration, nor its purport,

was lost on his companion. She eyed him narrowly while he spoke, and cast upon him a look of intelligence which sufficiently showed that she guessed what had been passing in his thoughts.

"Hush!" said the girl, stooping over him, and pointing to the door as she looked cautiously round. "You can't help yourself. I have tried hard for you, but all to no purpose. You are hedged round and round; and if ever you are to get loose from here, this is not the time."

Struck by the energy of her manner, Oliver looked up in her face with great surprise. She seemed to speak the truth; her countenance was white and agitated, and she trembled with very earnestness.

"I have saved you from being ill-used once, and I will again, and I do now," continued the girl aloud; "for those who would have fetched you, if I had not, would have been far more rough than me. I have promised for your being quiet and silent: if you are not, you will only do harm to yourself and me too; and perhaps be my death. See here! I have borne all this for you already, as true as God sees me show it."

She pointed, hastily, to some livid bruises on her neck and arms, and continued with great rapidity:

"Remember this! and don't let me suffer more for you just now. If I could help you, I would; but I have not the power. They don't mean to

harm you; and whatever they make you do is no fault of yours. Hush! every word from you is a blow for me. Give me your hand. Make haste! Your hand!"

She caught the hand which Oliver instinctively placed in hers, and, blowing out the light, drew him after her up the stairs. The door was opened quickly by some one shrouded in the darkness, and was as quickly closed when they had passed out. A hackney cabriolet was in waiting. With the same vehemence which she had exhibited in addressing Oliver, the girl pulled him in with her, and drew the curtains close. The driver wanted no directions, but lashed his horse into full speed without the delay of an instant.

The girl still held Oliver fast by the hand, and continued to pour into his ear the warnings and assurances she had already imparted. All was so quick and hurried that he had scarcely time to recollect where he was, or how he came there, when the carriage stopped at the house to which the Jew's steps had been directed on the previous evening.

For one brief moment Oliver cast a hurried glance along the empty street, and a cry for help hung upon his lips. But the girl's voice was in his ear, beseeching him in such tones of agony to remember her, that he had not the heart to utter it. While he hesitated, the opportunity was gone, for he was already in the house, and the door was shut.

"This way," said the girl, releasing her hold for the first time. "Bill!"

"Hallo!" replied Sikes, appearing at the head of the stairs with a candle. "Oh! that's the time of day. Come on!"

This was a very strong expression of approbation, an uncommonly hearty welcome, from a person of Mr. Sikes's temperament. Nancy, appearing much gratified thereby, saluted him cordially.

"Bull's-eye's gone home with Tom," observed Sikes, as he lighted them up. "He'd have been in the way."

"That's right," rejoined Nancy.

"So you've got the kid," said Sikes, when they had all reached the room, closing the door as he spoke.

"Yes; here he is," replied Nancy.

"Did he come quiet?" inquired Sikes.

"Like a lamb," rejoined Nancy.

"I'm glad to hear it," said Sikes, looking grimly at Oliver; "for the sake of his young carcass, as would otherways have suffered for it. Come here, young 'un; and let me read you a lectur', which is as well got over at once."

Thus addressing his new pupil, Mr. Sikes pulled off Oliver's cap and threw it into a corner; and then, taking him by the shoulder, sat himself down by the table, and stood the boy in front of him.

"Now, first; do you know wot this is?" inquired

Sikes, taking up a pocket-pistol which lay on the table.

Oliver replied in the affirmative.

"Well, then, look here," continued Sikes. "This is powder, that 'ere's a bullet, and this is a little bit of a old hat for waddin'."

Oliver murmured his comprehension of the different bodies referred to; and Mr. Sikes proceeded to load the pistol, with great nicety and deliberation.

"Now it's loaded," said Mr. Sikes, when he had finished.

"Yes, I see it is, sir," replied Oliver.

"Well," said the robber, grasping Oliver's wrist tightly, and putting the barrel so close to his temple that they touched; at which moment the boy could not repress a start—"if you speak a word when you're out o' doors with me, except when I speak to you, that loading will be in your head without notice. So, if you *do* make up your mind to speak without leave, say your prayers first."

Having bestowed a scowl upon the object of this warning, to increase its effect, Mr. Sikes continued:—

"As near as I know, there isn't anybody as would be asking very partickler arter you, if you *was* disposed of; so I needn't take this devil-and-all of trouble to explain matters to you, if it warn't for your own good. D'ye hear me?"

"The short and the long of what you mean," said Nancy, speaking very emphatically, and slightly frowning at Oliver, as if to bespeak his serious attention to her words, "is, that if you're crossed by him in this job you have on hand, you'll prevent his ever telling tales afterwards by shooting him through the head; and will take your chance of swinging for it, as you do for a great many other things in the way of business, every month of your life."

"That's it!" observed Mr. Sikes, approvingly; "women can always put things in fewest words. Except when it's a-blowing up; and then they lengthens it out. And now that he's thoroughly up to it, let's have some supper, and get a snooze before starting."

In pursuance of this request, Nancy quickly laid the cloth, and, disappearing for a few minutes, presently returned with a pot of porter and a dish of sheep's heads; which gave occasion to several pleasant witticisms on the part of Mr. Sikes, founded upon the singular coincidence of "jemmies" being a cant name common to them, and also to an ingenious implement much used in his profession. Indeed, the worthy gentleman, stimulated, perhaps, by the immediate prospect of being in active service, was in great spirits and good-humour; in proof whereof it may be here remarked that he humorously drank all the beer at a draught, and

did not utter, on a rough calculation, more than fourscore oaths during the whole progress of the meal.

Supper being ended—it may be easily conceived that Oliver had no great appetite for it—Mr. Sikes disposed of a couple of glasses of spirits and water, and threw himself upon the bed, ordering Nancy, with many imprecations in case of failure, to call him at five precisely. Oliver stretched himself in his clothes by command of the same authority on a mattress upon the floor; and the girl, mending the fire, sat before it, in readiness to rouse them at the appointed time.

For a long time Oliver lay awake, thinking it not impossible that Nancy might seek that opportunity of whispering some further advice; but the girl sat brooding over the fire, without moving, save now and then to trim the light. Weary with watching and anxiety, he at length fell asleep.

When he awoke the table was covered with tea things, and Sikes was thrusting various articles into the pockets of his greatcoat, which hung over the back of a chair; while Nancy was busily engaged in preparing breakfast. It was not yet daylight, for the candle was still burning, and it was quite dark outside. A sharp rain, too, was beating against the window panes, and the sky looked black and cloudy.

"Now then!" growled Sikes, as Oliver started

up; "half-past five! Look sharp, or you'll get no breakfast, for it's late as it is."

Oliver was not long in making his toilet; and, having taken some breakfast, replied to a surly inquiry from Sikes, by saying he was quite ready.

Nancy, scarcely looking at the boy, threw him a handkerchief to tie round his throat; and Sikes gave him a large rough cape to button over his shoulders. Thus attired, he gave his hand to the robber, who, merely pausing to show him with a menacing gesture, that he had the pistol in a side-pocket of his greatcoat, clasped it firmly in his, and, exchanging a farewell with Nancy, led him away.

Oliver turned, for an instant, when they reached the door, in the hope of meeting a look from the girl. But she had resumed her old seat in front of the fire, and sat perfectly motionless before it.

This might be described as moral melodrama or melodrama where character and lesson are fully as important as plot. Dickens took the "shilling shocker" and made it teach men the fellow feeling that makes them wondrous kind.

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

The humanitarian tendency which was to make Dickens a great reformer was shown in *Oliver Twist,* with its satire on the treatment of the poor in workhouse and prison. In the next book, *Nich-*

olas Nickleby, we get his first famous exposure of the evil methods of certain schools of the day. Nicholas, a fine young fellow, who in order to support his mother and sister Kate has engaged himself to teach in Dotheboys Academy in Yorkshire, kept by the cruel and avaricious Mr. and Mrs. Squeers, has found his employers' methods intolerable, and in the scene given breaks out in rebellion against them. Smike, a poor half-witted drudge whom Nicholas befriends, has attempted to run away and been caught and haled back for punishment.

Nicholas Thrashes Squeers

The news that Smike had been caught and brought back in triumph, ran like wild-fire through the hungry community, and expectation was on tiptoe all the morning. On tiptoe it was destined to remain, however, until afternoon; when Squeers, having refreshed himself with his dinner, and further strengthened himself by an extra libation or so, made his appearance (accompanied by his amiable partner) with a countenance of portentous import, and a fearful instrument of flagellation, strong, supple, wax-ended, and new,—in short, purchased that morning, expressly for the occasion.

"Is every boy here?" asked Squeers, in a tremendous voice.

Every boy was there, but every boy was afraid

to speak; so Squeers glared along the lines to assure himself; and every eye drooped, and every head cowered down, as he did so.

"Each boy keep his place," said Squeers, administering his favourite blow to the desk, and regarding with gloomy satisfaction the universal start which it never failed to occasion. "Nickleby! to your desk, sir."

It was remarked by more than one small observer that there was a curious and unusual expression in the usher's face; but he took his seat, without opening his lips in reply. Squeers, casting a triumphant glance at his assistant and a look of most comprehensive despotism on the boys, left the room, and shortly afterwards returned, dragging Smike by the collar—or rather by that fragment of his jacket which was nearest the place where his collar would have been, had he boasted such a decoration.

In any other place, the appearance of the wretched, jaded, spiritless object would have occasioned a murmur of compassion and remonstrance. It had some effect, even there; for the lookers-on moved uneasily in their seats; and a few of the boldest ventured to steal looks at each other, expressive of indignation and pity.

They were lost on Squeers, however, whose gaze was fastened on the luckless Smike, as he inquired, according to custom in such cases, whether he had anything to say for himself.

"Nothing, I suppose?" said Squeers, with a diabolical grin.

Smike glanced round, and his eye rested, for an instant, on Nicholas, as if he had expected him to intercede; but his look was riveted on his desk.

"Have you anything to say?" demanded Squeers again, giving his right arm two or three flourishes to try its power and suppleness. "Stand a little out of the way, Mrs. Squeers, my dear; I've hardly got room enough."

"Spare me, sir!" cried Smike.

"Oh! that's all, is it?" said Squeers. "Yes, I'll flog you within an inch of your life, and spare you that."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Mrs. Squeers, "that's a good 'un!"

"I was driven to do it," said Smike faintly; and casting another imploring look about him.

"Driven to do it, were you?" said Squeers. "Oh! it wasn't your fault; it was mine, I suppose—eh?"

"A nasty, ungrateful, pig-headed, brutish, obstinate, sneaking dog," exclaimed Mrs. Squeers, taking Smike's head under her arm, and administering a cuff at every epithet; "what does he mean by that?"

"Stand aside, my dear," replied Squeers. "We'll try and find out."

Mrs. Squeers, being out of breath with her exertions, complied. Squeers caught the boy firmly in his grip; one desperate cut had fallen on his

body—he was wincing from the lash and uttering a scream of pain—it was raised again, and again about to fall—when Nicholas Nickleby suddenly started up, cried "Stop!" in a voice that made the rafters ring.

"Who cried stop?" said Squeers, turning savagely round.

"I," said Nicholas, stepping forward. "This must not go on."

"Must not go on!" cried Squeers, almost in a shriek.

"No!" thundered Nicholas.

Aghast and stupefied by the boldness of the interference, Squeers released his hold of Smike, and falling back a pace or two, gazed upon Nicholas with looks that were positively frightful.

"I say must not," repeated Nicholas, nothing daunted; "shall not. I will prevent it."

Squeers continued to gaze upon him, with his eyes starting out of his head; but astonishment had actually, for the moment, bereft him of speech.

"You have disregarded all my quiet interference in the miserable lad's behalf," said Nicholas; "you have returned no answer to the letter in which I begged forgiveness for him, and offered to be responsible that he would remain quietly here. Don't blame me for this public interference. You have brought it upon yourself; not I."

"Sit down, beggar!" screamed Squeers, almost

beside himself with rage, and seizing Smike as he spoke.

"Wretch," rejoined Nicholas, fiercely, "touch him at your peril! I will not stand by, and see it done. My blood is up, and I have the strength of ten such men as you. Look to yourself, for by Heaven I will not spare you, if you drive me on!"

"Stand back," cried Squeers, brandishing his weapon.

"I have a long series of insults to avenge," said Nicholas, flushed with passion; "and my indignation is aggravated by the dastardly cruelties practised on helpless infancy in this foul den. Have a care; for if you do raise the devil within me, the consequences shall fall heavily upon your own head!"

He had scarcely spoken, when Squeers, in a violent outbreak of wrath, and with a cry like the howl of a wild beast, spat upon him, and struck him a blow across the face with his instrument of torture, which raised up a bar of livid flesh as it was inflicted. Smarting with the agony of the blow, and concentrating into that one moment all his feelings of rage, scorn, and indignation, Nicholas sprang upon him, wrested the weapon from his hand, and pinning him by the throat, beat the ruffian till he roared for mercy.

The boys—with the exception of Master Squeers, who, coming to his father's assistance, harassed the enemy in the rear—moved not, hand or foot; but

Mrs. Squeers, with many shrieks for aid, hung on to the tail of her partner's coat, and endeavoured to drag him from his infuriated adversary; while Miss Squeers, who had been peeping through the key-hole in expectation of a very different scene, darted in at the very beginning of the attack, and after launching a shower of inkstands at the usher's head, beat Nicholas to her heart's content: animating herself, at every blow, with the recollection of his having refused her proffered love, and thus imparting additional strength to an arm which (as she took after her mother in this respect) was, at no time, one of the weakest.

Nicholas, in the full torrent of his violence, felt the blows no more than if they had been dealt with feathers; but, becoming tired of the noise and uproar, and feeling that his arm grew weak besides, he threw all his remaining strength into half-a-dozen finishing cuts, and flung Squeers from him, with all the force he could muster. The violence of his fall precipitated Mrs. Squeers completely over an adjacent form; and Squeers, striking his head against it in his descent, lay at his full length on the ground, stunned and motionless.

This is one of many scenes which stand for the author's power in "situations," in the stage sense. His stories have always been in demand for theater use; all the main novels have been dramatized.

In 1839 Charles Dickens wrote a letter to his friend and biographer, John Forster, in which he made a suggestion to be transmitted to his publishers, Chapman and Hall, concerning the bringing out of a weekly magazine, a miscellany of essays, sketches and narratives, to which Dickens himself was to be the chief contributor. The object of the author was to have thus a steady outlet for his pen, without binding himself too straightly to the tyranny of a sustained piece of fiction. The idea was conceived of a sort of Club, a throw-back to Pickwick, with that worthy and Sam Weller occasionally introduced. Various matter was to be furnished by the members, who met with an odd old fellow, Master Humphrey, who keeps his manuscripts in a quaint clock—hence "Master Humphrey's Clock" as a title.

This idea was put into action, and the sales of the first number started off well, but when the public, already enamoured of Dickens, the story-teller, saw that there was to be no continuous fiction, the circulation lagged. Meanwhile, the author of *Nickleby* had the germ of Little Nell in his mind; he began *Old Curiosity Shop,* the response was quick and enthusiastic, and what was planned for a miscellany became another novel, one of the most beloved and famous of his whole career. Master Humphrey was forgotten, as the child-guardian of her weak grandfather took the stage, along with

Dick Swiveller, the wee slavey he called by the high-sounding name of the Marchioness, and the other characters that have endeared this book to countless readers.

OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

Nothing in the whole range of Dickens's work is preserved in more affectionate memory than his picture of Little Nell and her weak yet loving grandfather. A later and sterner critical taste has declared that the graver side of the tale, centering in the misfortunes of the famous pair and involving the pathetic death of the grandchild, is sentimental and melodramatic. But however this may be, such comic characterizations as are here illustrated in the person of Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness, shine but the more brightly with time.

Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness

While these acts and deeds were in progress in and out of the office of Sampson Brass, Richard Swiveller, being often left alone therein, began to find the time hang heavy on his hands. For the better preservation of his cheerfulness therefore, and to prevent his faculties from rusting, he provided himself with a cribbage-board and a pack of cards, and accustomed himself to play at cribbage with a dummy, for twenty, thirty, or sometimes

even fifty thousand pounds a side, besides many hazardous bets to a considerable amount.

As these games were very silently conducted, notwithstanding the magnitude of the interests involved, Mr. Swiveller began to think that on those evenings when Mr. and Miss Brass were out (and they often went out now) he heard a kind of snorting or hard-breathing sound in the direction of the door, which it occurred to him, after some reflection, must proceed from the small servant, who always had a cold from damp living. Looking intently that way one night, he plainly distinguished an eye gleaming and glistening at the keyhole; and having now no doubt that his suspicions were correct, he stole softly to the door, and pounced upon her before she was aware of his approach.

"Oh! I didn't mean any harm indeed, upon my word I didn't," cried the small servant, struggling like a much larger one. "It's so very dull, downstairs. Please don't you tell upon me, please don't."

"Tell upon you!" said Dick. "Do you mean to say you were looking through the keyhole for company?"

"Yes, upon my word I was," replied the small servant.

"How long have you been cooling your eye there?" said Dick.

"Oh, ever since you first began to play them cards, and long before."

Vague recollections of several fantastic exercises with which he had refreshed himself after the fatigues of business, and to all of which, no doubt, the small servant was a party, rather disconcerted Mr. Swiveller; but he was not very sensitive on such points, and recovered himself speedily.

"Well,—come in"—he said, after a little consideration. "Here—sit down, and I'll teach you how to play."

"Oh! I durstn't do it," rejoined the small servant; "Miss Sally 'ud kill me, if she know'd I come up here."

"Have you got a fire downstairs?" said Dick.

"A very little one," replied the small servant.

"Miss Sally couldn't kill me if she know'd I went down there, so I'll come," said Richard, putting the cards into his pocket. "Why, how thin you are! What do you mean by it?"

"It an't my fault."

"Could you eat any bread and meat?" said Dick, taking down his hat. "Yes? Ah! I thought so. Did you ever taste beer?"

"I had a sip of it once," said the small servant.

"Here's a state of things!" cried Mr. Swiveller, raising his eyes to the ceiling. "She *never* tasted it—it can't be tasted in a sip! Why, how old are you?"

"I don't know."

Mr. Swiveller opened his eyes very wide, and

appeared thoughtful for a moment; then, bidding the child mind the door until he came back, vanished straightway.

Presently, he returned, followed by the boy from the public-house, who bore in one hand a plate of bread and beef, and in the other a great pot, filled with some very fragrant compound, which sent forth a grateful steam, and was indeed choice purl, made after a particular recipe which Mr. Swiveller had imparted to the landlord, at a period when he was deep in his books and desirous to conciliate his friendship. Relieving the boy of his burden at the door, and charging his little companion to fasten it to prevent surprise, Mr. Swiveller followed her into the kitchen.

"There!" said Richard, putting the plate before her. "First of all clear that off, and then you'll see what's next."

The small servant needed no second bidding, and the plate was soon empty.

"Next," said Dick, handing the purl, "take a pull at that; but moderate your transports, you know, for you're not used to it. Well, is it good?"

"Oh! isn't it?" said the small servant.

Mr. Swiveller appeared gratified beyond all expression by this reply, and took a long draught himself; steadfastly regarding his companion while he did so. These preliminaries disposed of, he applied himself to teaching her the game, which she

soon learnt tolerably well, being both sharp-witted and cunning.

"Now," said Mr. Swiveller, putting two sixpences into a saucer, and trimming the wretched candle, when the cards had been cut and dealt, "those are the stakes. If you win, you get 'em all. If I win, I get 'em. To make it seem more real and pleasant, I shall call you the Marchioness, do you hear?"

The small servant nodded.

"Then, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, "fire away!"

The Marchioness, holding her cards very tight in both hands, considered which to play, and Mr. Swiveller, assuming the gay and fashionable air which such society required, took another pull at the tankard, and waited for her lead.

Barnaby Rudge is an earlier sally in the field of historic romance in which the masterpiece is *A Tale of Two Cities,* so that our illustration may be drawn from the later book. Nevertheless, it is a striking study of the Gordon riots; and the character of poor Barnaby himself—one of the half-witted folk so tenderly handled by the author—of Dolly Varden, Simon Tappertit, and others still, are additions to the Dickens gallery. Moreover, there is a marked gain in constructional care and closeness over the previous books; the author evidently is studying the technic of his craft.

CHAPTER V

Maturity

IN a story like *Martin Chuzzlewit,* which in ground-plan is a melodrama with a murder central in its structure, and yet contains some of the author's notable comedy, with unforgettable figures in it like the hypocrite Pecksniff, the humble idealist, Tom Pinch, and the incurable optimist, Mark Tapley, we see Dickens still feeling his way toward that organic handling of story which means complete mastery of the material. The novel is loosely constructed, and the American scenes were introduced after the book was under way, in order to quicken interest, although a deflection from the main business of the tale, which was to show a well-intentioned though austere uncle reforming a nephew through a ruse, while a hypocritical knave sought to ruin the plan. In the maturer novels following this able but unequal book, that is to say, in *Dombey and Son, David Copperfield, Bleak House,* the reader may note not only the extension of the portrait gallery of Dickens's "adorable drolls" and tender-hearted black sheep, but the improving of his fictional art in the matter of close-knit structure

and a clearer sense of organism as a whole. In a word, the great master of tears and smiles, the creator of eccentric character and extravagant scene, was growing mellow both in his art and his view of life; the teacher in him was coming to be a controlling power, though not at the expense of his natural gifts as story-teller. It should always be understood of Dickens, that the frank didacticism of his intention and method did not interfere with his possession of a genius for the depiction of the foibles, frailties and virtues of mankind. Teacher, humanitarian, he more plainly became as he continued to produce stories for a full generation, from 1836 to his death in 1870. But representative novelist he remained, and he became a better artist as he matured.

MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT

One of Dickens's most justly famed portraits is that of Sarah Gamp in this story, a bibulous and venal nurse of the evil old dispensation. Her evilness is not whitewashed, yet the author manages so to bring out the comic aspects of her type as to set her beside Tony Weller in the gallery of drolls which Dickens has painted for the world. The undertaker, Mr. Mould, is also a capital example of the way in which he extracts fun from minor personages and makes them memorable.

Mrs. Gamp Calls on Mr. Mould

"Tell Mrs. Gamp to come upstairs," said Mould. "Now, Mrs. Gamp, what's *your* news?"

The lady in question was by this time in the doorway, curtsying to Mrs. Mould. At the same moment a peculiar fragrance was borne upon the breeze, as if a passing fairy had hiccoughed, and had previously been to a wine-vault.

Mrs. Gamp made no response to Mr. Mould, but curtsied to Mrs. Mould again, and held up her hands and eyes, as in a devout thanksgiving that she looked so well. She was neatly but not gaudily attired, in the weeds she had worn when Mr. Pecksniff had the pleasure of making her acquaintance, and was perhaps the turning of a scale more snuffy.

"There are some happy creeturs," Mrs. Gamp observed, "as time runs back'ards with, and you are one, Mrs. Mould; not that he need do nothing except use you in his most owldacious way for years to come, I'm sure, for young you are and will be. I says to Mrs. Harris," Mrs. Gamp continued, "only t'other day—the last Monday evening fortnight as ever dawned upon this Piljian's Projiss of a mortal wale—I says to Mrs. Harris when she says to me, 'Years and our trials, Mrs. Gamp, sets marks upon us all,'—'Say not the words, Mrs. Harris, if you and me is to be continual friends, for sech is not the case. Mrs. Mould,' I says, making

so free, I will confess, as use the name" (she curtsied here), " 'is one of them that goes agen the observation straight; and never, Mrs. Harris, whilst I've a drop of breath to draw, will I set by, and not stand up, don't think it.' 'I ast your pardon, ma'am,' says Mrs. Harris. 'I humbly grant your grace; for if ever a woman lived as would see her feller creeturs into fits to serve her friends, well do I know that woman's name is Sairey Gamp.' "

At this point she was fain to stop for breath; and advantage may be taken of the circumstance to state that a fearful mystery surrounded this lady of the name of Harris, whom no one in the circle of Mrs. Gamp's acquaintance had ever seen, neither did any human being know her place of residence, though Mrs. Gamp appeared on her own showing to be in constant communication with her. There were conflicting rumours on the subject; but the prevalent opinion was that she was a phantom of Mrs. Gamp's brain—as Messrs. Doe and Roe are fictions of the law—created for the express purpose of holding visionary dialogues with her on all manner of subjects, and invariably winding up with a compliment to the excellence of her nature.

"And likeways what a pleasure," said Mrs. Gamp, turning with a tearful smile towards the daughters, "to see them two young ladies as I know'd afore a tooth in their pretty heads was cut, and have many a day seen—ah, the sweet creeturs! — playing at

berryins down in the shop, and follerin' the order-book to its long home in the iron safe! But that's all past and over, Mrs. Mould"—and she shook her head waggishly—"that's all past and over now; sir, an't it?"

"Changes, Mrs. Gamp, changes!" returned the undertaker.

"More changes, too, to come, afore we've done with changes, sir," said Mrs. Gamp, nodding yet more waggishly than before. "Young ladies with such faces thinks of something else besides berryins, don't they, sir?"

"I am sure I don't know, Mrs. Gamp," said Mould, with a chuckle.—"Not bad in Mrs. Gamp, my dear?"

"Oh, yes, you do know, sir!" said Mrs. Gamp; "and so does Mrs. Mould, your 'ansome pardner, too, sir; and so do I, although the blessing of a daughter was deniged me; which, if we had had one, Gamp would certainly have drunk its little shoes right off its feet, as with our precious boy he did, and arterwards send the child a errand to sell his wooden leg for any money it would fetch as matches in the rough, and bring it home in liquor. Oh, yes, you do know, sir," said Mrs. Gamp, wiping her eyes with her shawl, and resuming the thread of her discourse. "There's something besides births and berryins in the newspapers, an't there, Mr. Mould?"

Mr. Mould winked at Mrs. Mould, whom he had by this time taken on his knee, and said, "No doubt. A good deal more, Mrs. Gamp.—Upon my life, Mrs. Gamp is very far from bad, my dear!"

"There's marryings, an't there, sir?" said Mrs. Gamp, while both the daughters blushed and tittered. "Bless their precious hearts, and well they knows it! Well you know'd it, too, and well did Mrs. Mould, when you was at their time of life! But my opinion is, you're all of one age now. For as to you and Mrs. Mould, sir, ever having grandchildren—"

"Oh! Fie, fie! Nonsense, Mrs. Gamp," replied the undertaker. "Devilish smart, though. Ca-pital!" This was in a whisper. "My dear"—aloud again—"Mrs. Gamp can drink a glass of rum, I dare say.—Sit down, Mrs. Gamp, sit down."

Mrs. Gamp took the chair that was nearest the door, and casting up her eyes towards the ceiling, feigned to be wholly insensible to the fact of a glass of rum being in preparation, until it was placed in her hand by one of the young ladies, when she exhibited the greatest surprise.

"A thing," she said, "as hardly ever, Mrs. Mould, occurs with me unless it is when I am indispoged, and find my hanf a pint of porter settling heavy on the chest. Mrs. Harris often and often says to me, 'Sairey Gamp,' she says, 'you raly do amaze me!' 'Mrs. Harris,' I says to her, 'why so? Give

it a name, I beg.' 'Telling the truth then, ma'am,' says Mrs. Harris, 'and shaming him as shall be nameless betwixt you and me, never did I think till I know'd you as any woman could sick-nurse, and monthly likeways, on the little that you takes to drink.' 'Mrs. Harris,' I says to her, 'none on us knows what we can do till we tries; and wunst, when me and Gamp kept 'ouse, I thought so too. But now,' I says, 'my hanf a pint of porter fully satisfies; perwisin', Mrs. Harris, that it is brought reg'lar, and draw'd mild. Whether I sicks or monthlies, ma'am, I hope I does my duty; but I am but a poor woman, and I earns my living hard; therefore I *do* require it, which I makes confession, to be brought reg'lar and draw'd mild.' "

The precise connection between these observations and the glass of rum did not appear; for Mrs. Gamp proposing as a toast, "The best of lucks to all!" took off the dram in quite a scientific manner, without any further remarks.

"And what's your news, Mrs. Gamp?" asked Mould again, as that lady wiped her lips upon her shawl, and nibbled a corner off a soft biscuit, which she appeared to carry in her pocket as a provision against contingent drams. "How's Mr. Chuffey?"

"Mr. Chuffey, sir," she replied, "is jest as usual; he an't no better, and he an't no worse. I take it very kind in the gentleman to have wrote up to you and said, 'Let Mrs. Gamp take care of him till I

come home;' but ev'ythink he does is kind. There an't a many like him. If there was, we shouldn't want no churches."

"What do you want to speak to me about, Mrs. Gamp?" said Mould, coming to the point.

"Jest this, sir," Mrs. Gamp returned, "with thanks to you for asking. There *is* a gent, sir, at the Bull in Holborn, as has been took ill there, and is bad abed. They have a day nurse as was recommended from Bartholomew's; and well I knows her, Mr. Mould, her name bein' Mrs. Prig, the best of creeturs. But she is otherwise engaged at night, and they are in wants of night-watching; consequent she says to them, having reposed the greatest friendliness in me for twenty year, 'The soberest person going, and the best of blessings in a sick-room, is Mrs. Gamp. Send a boy to Kingsgate Street,' she says, 'and snap her up at any price, for Mrs. Gamp is worth her weight and more in goldian guineas.' My landlord brings the message down to me, and says, 'Bein' in a light place where you are, and this job promising so well, why not unite the two?' 'No, sir,' I says, 'not unbeknown to Mr. Mould, and therefore do not think it. But I will go to Mr. Mould,' I says, 'and ast him, if you like.'" Here she looked sideways at the undertaker, and came to a stop.

"Night-watching, eh?" said Mould, rubbing his chin.

"From eight o'clock till eight, sir. I will not deceive you," Mrs. Gamp rejoined.

"And then go back, eh?" said Mould.

"Quite free then, sir, to attend to Mr. Chuffey. His ways bein' quiet, and his hours early, he'd be abed, sir, nearly all the time. I will not deny," said Mrs. Gamp, with meekness, "that I am but a poor woman, and that the money is a object; but do not let that act upon you, Mr. Mould. Rich folks may ride on camels, but it an't so easy for 'em to see out of a needle's eye. That is my comfort, and I hope I knows it."

"Well, Mrs. Gamp," observed Mould, "I don't see any particular objection to your earning an honest penny, under such circumstances. I should keep it quiet, I think, Mrs. Gamp. I wouldn't mention it to Mr. Chuzzlewit on his return, for instance, unless it were necessary, or he asked you point-blank."

"The very words was on my lips, sir," Mrs. Gamp rejoined. "Suppoging that the gent should die, I hope I might take the liberty of saying as I know'd some one in the undertaking line, and yet give no offence to you, sir?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Gamp," said Mould, with much condescension. "You might casually remark, in such a case, that we do the thing pleasantly and in a great variety of styles, and are generally considered to make it as agreeable as possible to the feel-

ings of the survivors. But don't obtrude it—don't obtrude it. Easy, easy! My dear, you may as well give Mrs. Gamp a card or two, if you please."

Mrs. Gamp received them, and scenting no more rum in the wind (for the bottle was locked up again), rose to take her departure.

"Wishing ev'ry happiness to this happy family," said Mrs. Gamp, "with all my heart. Good arternoon, Mrs. Mould! If I was Mr. Mould, I should be jealous of you, ma'am; and I'm sure, if I was you, I should be jealous of Mr. Mould."

"Tut, tut! Bah, bah! Go along, Mrs. Gamp!" cried the delighted undertaker.

"As to the young ladies," said Mrs. Gamp, dropping a curtsy, "bless their sweet looks! How they can ever reconcize it with their duties to be so grown up with sech young parents, it an't for sech as me to give a guess at."

"Nonsense, nonsense. Be off, Mrs. Gamp!" cried Mould. But in the height of his gratification, he actually pinched Mrs. Mould as he said it.

"I'll tell you what, my dear," he observed, when Mrs. Gamp had at last withdrawn, and shut the door, "that's a ve-ry shrewd woman. That's a woman whose intellect is immensely superior to her station in life. That's a woman who observes and reflects in an uncommon manner. She's the sort of woman, now," said Mould, drawing his silk handkerchief over his head again, and composing him-

self for a nap, "one would almost feel disposed to bury for nothing, and do it neatly too!"

DOMBEY AND SON

This book might be described as primarily a story having for theme the humbling of the pride of a proud father whose little son, upon whom he has counted to perpetuate the worldly honor of the family, dies, while the neglected daughter finally takes his place in the softened heart of the parent, who, through her agency, learns a fundamental lesson of life. There is nothing finer in all Dickens's exhibition of humanity than his tenderly perceptive portrayal of childhood; a present-day educator has declared that no man of English race has done so much for child pedagogy as our author. And little Paul Dombey is one of the choicest creations of the hand which also drew the Doll's Dressmaker, and young David, and Little Nell, and Jo, the street boy, and Tiny Tim, and others yet in the consideration of whom our eyes grow moist.

What the Waves Were Always Saying

Paul had never risen from his little bed. He lay there listening to the noises in the street, quite tranquilly; not caring much how the time went, but watching it and watching everything about him with observing eyes.

When the sunbeams struck into his room through the rustling blinds, and quivered on the opposite wall like golden water, he knew that evening was coming on, and that the sky was red and beautiful. As the reflection died away, and a gloom went creeping up the wall, he watched it deepen, deepen, deepen into night. Then he thought how the long streets were dotted with lamps, and how the peaceful stars were shining overhead. His fancy had a strange tendency to wander to the river, which he knew was flowing through the great city: and now he thought how black it was, and how deep it would look, reflecting the hosts of stars—and more than all, how steadily it rolled away to meet the sea.

As it grew later in the night, and footsteps in the street became so rare that he could hear them coming, count them as they passed, and lose them in the hollow distance, he would lie and watch the many-coloured ring about the candle, and wait patiently for day. His only trouble was, the swift and rapid river. He felt forced, sometimes, to try to stop it—to stem it with his childish hands—or choke its way with sand—and when he saw it coming on, resistless, he cried out! But a word from Florence, who was always at his side, restored him to himself; and leaning his poor head upon her breast, he told Floy of his dream, and smiled.

When day began to dawn again, he watched for

the sun; and when its cheerful light began to sparkle in the room, he pictured to himself—pictured! he saw—the high church towers rising up into the morning sky, the town reviving, waking, starting into life once more, the river, glistening as it rolled (but rolling fast as ever), and the country bright with dew. Familiar sounds and cries came by degrees into the street below; the servants in the house were roused and busy; faces looked in at the door, and voices asked his attendants softly how he was. Paul always answered himself, "I am better. I am a great deal better, thank you! Tell papa so!"

By little and little, he got tired of the bustle of the day, the noise of carriages and carts, and people passing and repassing; and would fall asleep, or be troubled with a restless and uneasy sense again —the child could hardly tell whether this were in his sleeping or his waking moments—of that rushing river. "Why, will it never stop, Floy?" he would sometimes ask her. "It is bearing me away, I think!"

But Floy could always soothe and reassure him; and it was his daily delight to make her lay her head down on his pillow, and take some rest.

"You are always watching me, Floy. Let me watch *you,* now!" They would prop him up with cushions in a corner of his bed, and there he would recline the while she lay beside him: bending for-

ward oftentimes to kiss her, and whispering to those who were near that she was tired, and how she had sat up so many nights beside him.

Thus, the flush of the day, in its heat and light, would gradually decline; and again the golden water would be dancing on the wall.

He was visited by as many as three grave doctors —they used to assemble downstairs, and come up together—and the room was so quiet, and Paul was so observant of them (though he never asked of anybody what they said) that he even knew the difference in the sound of their watches. But his interest centred in Sir Parker Peps, who always took his seat on the side of the bed. For Paul had heard them say long ago, that that gentleman had been with his mamma when she clasped Florence in her arms, and died. And he could not forget it, now. He liked him for it. He was not afraid.

The people round him changed as unaccountably as on that first night at Doctor Blimber's—except Florence; Florence never changed—and what had been Sir Parker Peps, was now his father, sitting with his head upon his hand. Old Mrs. Pipchin dozing in an easy-chair, often changed to Miss Tox, or his aunt; and Paul was quite content to shut his eyes again, and see what happened next without emotion. But this figure with its head upon its hand returned so often, and remained so long, and sat so still and solemn, never speaking, never being

spoken to, and rarely lifting up its face, that Paul began to wonder languidly, if it were real; and in the night-time saw it sitting there, with fear.

"Floy!" he said. "What *is* that?"

"Where, dearest?"

"There! at the bottom of the bed."

"There's nothing there, except papa!"

The figure lifted up its head, and rose, and coming to the bedside, said: "My own boy! Don't you know me?"

Paul looked in the face, and thought, was this his father? But the face, so altered to his thinking, thrilled while he gazed, as if it were in pain; and before he could reach out both his hands to take it between them, and draw it towards him, the figure turned away quickly from the little bed, and went out at the door.

Paul looked at Florence with a fluttering heart, but he knew what she was going to say, and stopped her with his face against her lips. The next time he observed the figure sitting at the bottom of the bed, he called to it.

"Don't be so sorry for me, dear papa! Indeed I am quite happy!"

His father coming, and bending down to him—which he did quickly, and without first pausing by the bedside—Paul held him round the neck, and repeated those words to him several times, and very earnestly; and Paul never saw him in his room

again at any time, whether it were day or night, but he called out, "Don't be so sorry for me! Indeed I am quite happy!" This was the beginning of his always saying in the morning that he was a great deal better, and that they were to tell his father so.

How many times the golden water danced upon the wall; how many nights the dark, dark river rolled towards the sea in spite of him; Paul never counted, never sought to know. If their kindness or his sense of it, could have increased, they were more kind, and he more grateful every day; but whether they were many days or few, appeared of little moment now to the gentle boy.

One night he had been thinking of his mother, and her picture in the drawing-room downstairs, and had thought she must have loved sweet Florence better than his father did, to have held her in her arms when she felt that she was dying—for even he, her brother, who had such dear love for her, could have no greater wish than that. The train of thought suggested to him to inquire if he had ever seen his mother; for he could not remember whether they had told him yes or no, the river running very fast, and confusing his mind.

"Floy, did I ever see mamma?"

"No, darling, why?"

"Did I ever see any kind face, like mamma's, looking at me when I was a baby, Floy?"

He asked incredulously, as if he had some vision of a face before him.

"Oh yes, dear!"

"Whose, Floy?"

"Your old nurse's. Often."

"And where is my old nurse!" said Paul. "Is she dead too? Floy, are we *all* dead, except you?"

There was a hurry in the room for an instant —longer, perhaps; but it seemed no more—then all was still again; and Florence, with her face quite colourless, but smiling, held his head upon her arm. Her arm trembled very much.

"Show me that old nurse, Floy, if you please!"

"She is not here, darling. She shall come to-morrow."

"Thank you, Floy!"

Paul closed his eyes with those words, and fell asleep. When he awoke the sun was high, and the broad day was clear and warm. He lay a little, looking at the windows, which were open, and the curtains rustling in the air, and waving to and fro: then he said, "Floy, is it to-morrow? Is she come?"

Some one seemed to go in quest of her. Perhaps it was Susan. Paul thought he heard her telling him when he had closed his eyes again, that she would soon be back; but he did not open them to see. She kept her word—perhaps she had never been away—but the next thing that happened was a noise of footsteps on the stairs, and then Paul

woke—woke mind and body—and sat upright in his bed. He saw them now about him. There was no gray mist before them, as there had been sometimes in the night. He knew them every one, and called them by their names.

"And who is this? Is this my old nurse?" said the child, regarding, with a radiant smile, a figure coming in.

Yes, yes. No other stranger would have shed those tears at sight of him, and called him her dear boy, her pretty boy, her own poor blighted child. No other woman would have stooped down by his bed, and taken up his wasted hand, and put it to her lips and breast, as one who had some right to fondle it. No other woman would have so forgotten everybody there but him and Floy, and been so full of tenderness and pity.

"Floy! this is a kind good face!" said Paul. "I am glad to see it again. Don't go away, old nurse. Stay here!"

His senses were all quickened, and he heard a name he knew.

"Who was that, who said 'Walter?'" he asked, looking round. "Some one said Walter. Is he here? I should like to see him very much."

Nobody replied directly; but his father soon said to Susan, "Call him back, then: let him come up!" After a short pause of expectation, during which he looked with smiling interest and wonder on his

nurse, and saw that she had not forgotten Floy, Walter was brought into the room. His open face and manner, and his cheerful eyes, had always made him a favorite with Paul; and when Paul saw him, he stretched out his hand, and said, "Good-by!"

"Good-by, my child!" cried Mrs. Pipchin, hurrying to his bed's head. "Not good-by?"

For an instant Paul looked at her with the wistful face with which he had so often gazed upon her in his corner by the fire. "Ah, yes," he said, placidly, "good-by! Walter dear, good-by!"—turning his head to where he stood, and putting out his hand again. "Where is papa?"

He felt his father's breath upon his cheek, before the words had parted from his lips.

"Remember Walter, dear papa," he whispered, looking in his face. "Remember Walter. I was fond of Walter!" The feeble hand waved in the air, as if it cried "good-by!" to Walter once again.

"Now lay me down," he said, "and Floy, come close to me, and let me see you!"

Sister and brother wound their arms around each other, and the golden light came streaming in, and fell upon them locked together.

"How fast the river runs, between its green banks and the rushes, Floy! But it's very near the sea. I hear the waves! They always said so!"

Presently he told her that the motion of the boat upon the stream was lulling him to rest. How green

the banks were now, how bright the flowers growing on them, and how tall the rushes! Now the boat was out at sea, but gliding smoothly on. And now there was a shore before him. Who stood on the bank!—

He put his hands together, as he had been used to do at his prayers. He did not remove his arms to do it; but they saw him fold them so, behind her neck.

"Mamma is like you, Floy. I know her by the face. But tell them that the print upon the stairs at school is not divine enough. The light about the head is shining on me as I go!"

The golden ripple on the wall came back again, and nothing else stirred in the room. The old, old fashion! The fashion that came in with our first garments, and will last unchanged until our race has run its course, and the wide firmament is rolled up like a scroll. The old, old fashion—Death!

Oh thank God, all who see it, for that older fashion yet, of Immortality! And look upon us, angels of young children, with regards not quite estranged, when the swift river bears us to the ocean!

But the grave texture of this typical story is lightened by some of the very best of the comic creations by which, perhaps, the world most readily remembers him: Captain Tuttle, and Toots, Mrs.

McStinger, and Major Bagstock, Susan Nipper, Miss Tox and Mrs. Pipchin.

Captain Cuttle Does a Little Business for the Young People

After taking a glass of warm rum-and-water at a tavern close by, to collect his thoughts, the Captain made a rush down the court, lest its good effects should evaporate, and appeared suddenly to Mr. Perch.

"Matey," said the Captain, in persuasive accents. "One of your Governors is named Carker."

Mr. Perch admitted it; but gave him to understand, as in official duty bound, that all his Governors were engaged, and never expected to be disengaged any more.

"Look'ee here, mate," said the Captain in his ear; "my name's Cap'en Cuttle."

The Captain would have hooked Perch gently to him, but Mr. Perch eluded the attempt; not so much in design, as in starting at the sudden thought that such a weapon unexpectedly exhibited to Mrs. Perch might, in her then condition, be destructive to that lady's hopes.

"If you'll be so good as just report Cap'en Cuttle here, when you get a chance," said the Captain, "I'll wait."

Saying which, the Captain took his seat on Mr. Perch's bracket, and drawing out his handkerchief from the crown of the glazed hat, which he jammed between his knees (without injury to its shape, for nothing human could bend it), rubbed his head well all over, and appeared refreshed. He subsequently arranged his hair with his hook, and sat looking round the office, contemplating the clerks with a serene respect.

The Captain's equanimity was so impenetrable, and he was altogether so mysterious a being, that Perch the messenger was daunted.

"What name was it you said?" asked Mr. Perch, bending down over him as he sat on the bracket.

"Cap'en," in a deep hoarse whisper.

"Yes," said Mr. Perch, keeping time with his head.

"Cuttle."

"Oh!" said Mr. Perch, in the same tone, for he caught it, and couldn't help it; the Captain, in his diplomacy, was so impressive. "I'll see if he's disengaged now. I don't know. Perhaps he may be for a minute."

"Aye, aye, my lad, I won't detain him longer than a minute," said the Captain, nodding with all the weighty importance that he felt within him.

Perch, soon returning, said, "Will Captain Cuttle walk this way?"

Mr. Carker, the Manager, standing on the hearth-

rug before the empty fireplace, which was ornamented with a castellated sheet of brown paper, looked at the Captain as he came in, with no very special encouragement.

"Mr. Carker?" said Captain Cuttle.

"I believe so," said Mr. Carker, showing all his teeth.

The Captain liked his answering with a smile; it looked pleasant. "You see," began the Captain, rolling his eyes slowly round the little room, and taking in as much of it as his shirt-collar permitted; "I'm a seafaring man myself, Mr. Carker, and Wal'r, as is on your books here, is almost a son of mine."

"Walter Gay?" said Mr. Carker, showing all his teeth again.

"Wal'r Gay it is," replied the Captain, "right!" The Captain's manner expressed a warm approval of Mr. Carker's quickness of perception. "I'm a intimate friend of his and his uncle's. Perhaps," said the Captain, "you may have heard your head Governor mention my name?—Captain Cuttle."

"No!" said Mr. Carker, with a still wider demonstration than before.

"Well," resumed the Captain, "I've the pleasure of his acquaintance. I waited upon him down on the Sussex coast there, with my young friend Wal'r, when—in short, when there was a little accommodation wanted." The Captain nodded his head in

a manner that was at once comfortable, easy, and expressive. "You remember, I dare say?"

"I think," said Mr. Carker, "I had the honour of arranging the business."

"To be sure!" returned the Captain. "Right again! you had. Now I've took the liberty of coming here—"

"Won't you sit down?" said Mr. Carker, smiling.

"Thank'ee," returned the Captain, availing himself of the offer. "A man does get more way upon himself, perhaps, in his conversation, when he sits down. Won't you take a cheer yourself?"

"No, thank you," said the Manager, standing, perhaps from the force of winter habit, with his back against the chimneypiece, and looking down upon the Captain with an eye in every tooth and gum. "You have taken the liberty, you were going to say—though it's none—"

"Thank'ee kindly, my lad," returned the Captain: "of coming here, on account of my friend Wal'r. Sol Gills, his uncle, is a man of science, and in science he may be considered a clipper; but he an't what I should altogether call a able seaman—not a man of practice. Wal'r is as trim a lad as ever stepped; but he's a little down by the head in one respect, and that is modesty. Now what I should wish to put to you," said the Captain, lowering his voice, and speaking in a kind of confidential growl, "in a friendly way, entirely between you and me,

and for my own private reckoning, 'till your head Governor has wore round a bit, and I can come alongside of him, is this.—Is everything right and comfortable here, and is Wal'r out'ard bound with a pretty fair wind?"

"What do you think now, Captain Cuttle?" returned Carker, gathering up his skirts and settling himself in his position. "*You* are a practical man; what do you think?"

The acuteness and significance of the Captain's eye as he cocked it in reply, no words short of those unutterable Chinese words before referred to could describe.

"Come!" said the Captain, unspeakably encouraged, "what do you say? Am I right or wrong?"

So much had the Captain expressed in his eye, emboldened and incited by Mr. Carker's smiling urbanity, that he felt himself in as fair a condition to put the question, as if he had expressed his sentiments with the utmost elaboration.

"Right," said Mr. Carker, "I have no doubt."

"Out'ard bound with fair weather, then, I say," cried Captain Cuttle.

Mr. Carker smiled assent.

"Wind right astarn, and plenty of it," pursued the Captain.

Mr. Carker smiled assent again.

"Aye, aye!" said Captain Cuttle, greatly relieved and pleased. "I know'd how she headed, well enough; I told Wal'r so. Thank'ee, thank'ee."

"Gay has brilliant prospects," observed Mr. Carker, stretching his mouth wider yet: "all the world before him."

"All the world and his wife too, as the saying is," returned the delighted Captain.

At the word "wife" (which he had uttered without design), the Captain stopped, cocked his eye again, and putting the glazed hat on the top of the knobby stick, gave it a twirl, and looked sideways at his always smiling friend.

"I'd bet a gill of old Jamaica," said the Captain, eyeing him attentively, "that I know what you're smiling at."

Mr. Carker took his cue, and smiled the more.

"It goes no farther?" said the Captain, making a poke at the door with the knobby stick to assure himself that it was shut.

"Not an inch," said Mr. Carker.

"You're a thinking of a capital F perhaps?" said the Captain.

Mr. Carker didn't deny it.

"Anything about a L," said the Captain, "or a O?"

Mr. Carker still smiled.

"Am I right again?" inquired the Captain in a whisper, with the scarlet circle on his forehead swelling in his triumphant joy.

Mr. Carker, in reply, still smiling, and now nodding assent, Captain Cuttle rose and squeezed him

by the hand, assuring him warmly, that they were on the same tack, and that as for him (Cuttle) he had laid his course that way all along. "He know'd her first," said the Captain, with all the secrecy and gravity that the subject demanded, "in an uncommon manner—*you* remember his finding her in the street when she was a'most a babby—he has liked her ever since, and she him, as much as two such youngsters can. We've always said, Sol Gills and me, that they was cut out for each other."

A cat, or a monkey, or a hyena, or a death's-head, could not have shown the Captain more teeth at one time, than Mr. Carker showed him at this period of their interview.

"There's a general in-draught that way," observed the happy Captain. "Wind and water sets in that direction, you see. Look at his being present t'other day!"

"Most favourable to his hopes," said Mr. Carker.

"Look at his being towed along in the wake of that day!" pursued the Captain. "Why, what can cut him adrift now?"

"Nothing," replied Mr. Carker.

"You're right again," returned the Captain, giving his hand another squeeze. "Nothing it is. So! steady! There's a son gone: pretty little creetur. An't there?"

"Yes, there's a son gone," said the acquiescent Carker.

"Pass the word, and there's another ready for you," quoth the Captain. "Nevy of a scientific uncle! Nevy of Sol Gills! Wal'r! Wal'r, as is already in your business! And"—said the Captain, rising gradually to a quotation he was preparing for a final burst, "who—comes from Sol Gills's daily, *to* your business, and your buzzums."

The Captain's complacency as he gently jogged Mr. Carker with his elbow, on concluding each of the foregoing short sentences, could be surpassed by nothing but the exultation with which he fell back and eyed him when he had finished this brilliant display of eloquence and sagacity; his great blue waistcoat heaving with the throes of such a masterpiece, and his nose in a state of violent inflammation from the same cause.

"Am I right?" said the Captain.

"Captain Cuttle," said Mr. Carker, bending down at the knees, for a moment, in an odd manner, as if he were falling together to hug the whole of himself at once, "your views in reference to Walter Gay are thoroughly and accurately right. I understand that we speak together in confidence."

"Honour!" interposed the Captain. "Not a word."

"To him or any one?" pursued the Manager.

Captain Cuttle frowned and shook his head.

"But merely for your own satisfaction and guid-

ance—and guidance, of course," repeated Mr. Carker, "with a view to your future proceedings."

"Thank'ee kindly, I am sure," said the Captain, listening with great attention.

"I have no hesitation in saying, that's the fact. You have hit the probabilities exactly."

"And with regard to your head Governor," said the Captain, "why an interview had better come about nat'ral between us. There's time enough."

Mr. Carker, with his mouth from ear to ear, repeated, "Time enough." Not articulating the words, but bowing his head affably, and forming them with his tongue and lips.

"And as I know—it's what I always said—that Wal'r's in a way to make his fortune," said the Captain.

"To make his fortune," Mr. Carker repeated, in the same dumb manner.

"And as Wal'r's going on this little voyage is, as I may say, in his day's work, and a part of his general expectations here," said the Captain.

"Of his general expectations here," assented Mr. Carker, dumbly as before.

"Why, so long as I know that," pursued the Captain, "there's no hurry, and my mind's at ease."

Mr. Carker still blandly assenting in the same voiceless manner, Captain Cuttle was strongly confirmed in his opinion that he was one of the most

agreeable men he had ever met, and that even Mr. Dombey might improve himself on such a model. With great heartiness, therefore, the Captain once again extended his enormous hand (not unlike an old block in colour), and gave him a grip that left upon his smoother flesh a proof impression of the chinks and crevices with which the Captain's palm was liberally tattooed.

"Farewell!" said the Captain. "I an't a man of many words, but I take it very kind of you to be so friendly, and above-board. You'll excuse me if I've been at all intruding, will you?" said the Captain.

"Not at all," returned the other.

"Thank'ee. My berth an't very roomy," said the Captain, turning back again, "but it's tolerably snug; and if you was to find yourself near Brig Place, number nine, at any time—will you make a note of it?—and would come upstairs, without minding what was said by the person at the door, I should be proud to see you."

With that hospitable invitation, the Captain said "Good day!" and walked out and shut the door; leaving Mr. Carker still reclining against the chimneypiece. In whose sly look and watchful manner; in whose false mouth, stretched but not laughing; in whose spotless cravat and very whiskers; even in whose silent passing of his soft hand over his white linen and his smooth face; there was something desperately cat-like.

The unconscious Captain walked out in a state of self-glorification that imparted quite a new cut to the broad blue suit. "Stand by, Ned!" said the Captain to himself. "You've done a little business for the youngsters to-day, my lad!"

The figure of Carker in this story illustrates a tendency in Dickens: his knaves in general are less realized and more of conventional shaping than his humorous characters.

DAVID COPPERFIELD

Confessedly his masterpiece, published when the author was thirty-eight, this story is the most autobiographic of any fiction in the list, which may be set down as one element of the appeal which it has always made. It depicts the life history of Copperfield from childhood to successful young manhood as an author, and the early scenes of hardship are drawn directly from Dickens's own experience. It is crowded full with scenes and characters that are as familiar and as great favorites as any fiction that ever came from an English pen.

From the wealth of portraiture, which involves Little Emily and Ham and Peggotty and Mrs. Gummidge, Heep, Micawber and Aunt Betsy, Mr. Dick, Barkis and Traddles, we may first take a scene which typically presents the man who has many of the traits of Dickens's own father, on the side of humor,

even as in *Little Dorrit,* the graver side of his parent is shown in the Father of the Marshalsea.

A Glimpse of the Micawbers at Canterbury

It was a little inn where Mr. Micawber put up, and he occupied a little room in it, partitioned off from the commercial room, and strongly flavored with tobacco-smoke. I think it was over the kitchen, because a warm, greasy smell appeared to come up through the chinks in the floor, and there was a flabby perspiration on the walls. I know it was near the bar, on account of the smell of spirits and jingling of glasses. Here, recumbent on a small sofa, underneath a picture of a racehorse, with her head close to the fire, and her feet pushing the mustard off the dumb-waiter at the other end of the room, was Mrs. Micawber, to whom Mr. Micawber entered first saying, "My dear, allow me to introduce to you a pupil of Doctor Strong's."

I noticed, by-the-bye, that although Mr. Micawber was just as much confused as ever about my age and standing, he always remembered, as a genteel thing, that I was a pupil of Dr. Strong's.

Mrs. Micawber was amazed, but very glad to see me. I was very very glad to see her too, and, after an affectionate greeting on both sides, sat down on the small sofa near her.

"My dear," said Mr. Micawber, "if you will men-

tion to Copperfield what our present position is, which I have no doubt he will like to know, I will go and look at the paper the while, and see whether anything turns up among the advertisements."

"I thought you were at Plymouth, ma'am," I said to Mrs. Micawber, as he went out.

"My dear Master Copperfield," she replied, "we went to Plymouth."

"To be on the spot," I hinted.

"Just so," said Mrs. Micawber—"to be on the spot. But the truth is, talent is not wanted in the Custom House. The local influence of my family was quite unavailing to obtain any employment in that department for a man of Mr. Micawber's abilities. They would rather *not* have a man of Mr. Micawber's abilities. He would only show the deficiency of the others. Apart from which," said Mrs. Micawber, "I will not disguise from you, my dear Master Copperfield, that when that branch of my family which settled in Plymouth became aware that Mr. Micawber was accompanied by myself, and by little Wilkens and his sister, and by the twins, they did not receive him with that ardour which he might have expected, being so newly released from captivity. In fact," said Mrs. Micawber, lowering her voice—"this is between ourselves —our reception was cool."

"Dear me!" I said.

"Yes," said Mrs. Micawber. "It is truly painful

to contemplate mankind in such an aspect, Master Copperfield, but our reception was decidedly cool. There is no doubt about it. In fact, that branch of my family which is settled in Plymouth became quite personal to Mr. Micawber, before we had been there a week."

I said, and thought, that they ought to be ashamed of themselves.

"Still, so it was," continued Mrs. Micawber. "Under such circumstances, what could a man of Mr. Micawber's spirit do? But one obvious course was left—to borrow of that branch of my family the money to return to London, and to return at any sacrifice."

"Then you all came back again, ma'am?" I said.

"We all came back again," replied Mrs. Micawber. "Since then, I have consulted other branches of my family on the course which it is most expedient for Mr. Micawber to take—for I maintain that he must take some course, Master Copperfield," said Mrs. Micawber argumentatively. "It is clear that a family of six, not including a domestic, cannot live upon air."

"Certainly, ma'am," said I.

"The opinion of those other branches of my family," pursued Mrs. Micawber, "is, that Mr. Micawber should immediately turn his attention to coals."

"To what, ma'am?"

"To coals," said Mrs. Micawber—"to the coal trade. Mr. Micawber was induced to think, on inquiry, that there might be an opening for a man of his talent in the Medway coal trade. Then, as Mr. Micawber very properly said, the first step to be taken clearly was, to come and *see* the Medway. Which we came and saw. I say 'we,' Master Copperfield; for I never will," said Mrs. Micawber with emotion—"I never will desert Mr. Micawber."

I murmured my admiration and approbation.

"We came," repeated Mrs. Micawber, "and saw the Medway. My opinion of the coal trade on that river is, that it may require talent, but that it certainly requires capital. Talent, Mr. Micawber has; capital, Mr. Micawber has not. We saw, I think, the greater part of the Medway; and that is my individual conclusion. Being so near here, Mr. Micawber was of opinion that it would be rash not to come on and see the cathedral—firstly, on account of its being so well worth seeing, and our never having seen it; and secondly, on account of the great probability of something turning up in a cathedral town. We have been here," said Mrs. Micawber, "three days. Nothing has, as yet, turned up; and it may not surprise you, my dear Master Copperfield, so much as it would a stranger, to know that we are at present waiting for a remittance from London to discharge our pecuniary obligations at this hotel. Until the arrival of that remittance,"

said Mrs. Micawber with much feeling, "I am cut off from my home (I allude to lodgings in Pentonville), from my boy and girl, and from my twins."

I felt the utmost sympathy for Mr. and Mrs. Micawber in this anxious extremity, and said as much to Mr. Micawber, who now returned—adding that I only wished I had money enough to lend them the amount they needed. Mr. Micawber's answer expressed the disturbance of his mind. He said, shaking hands with me, "Copperfield, you are a true friend; but when the worst comes to the worst, no man is without a friend who is possessed of shaving materials." At this dreadful hint Mrs. Micawber threw her arms round Mr. Micawber's neck, and entreated him to be calm. He wept; but so far recovered, almost immediately, as to ring the bell for the waiter, and bespeak a hot kidney pudding and a plate of shrimps for breakfast in the morning.

When I took my leave of them, they both pressed me so much to come and dine before they went away that I could not refuse. But as I knew I could not come next day, when I should have a good deal to prepare in the evening, Mr. Micawber arranged that he would call at Doctor Strong's in the course of the morning (having a presentiment that the remittance would arrive by that post), and propose the day after, if it would suit me better. Accordingly, I was called out of school next forenoon, and found Mr. Micawber in the parlour, who

had called to say that the dinner would take place as proposed. When I asked him if the remittance had come, he pressed my hand and departed.

As I was looking out of the window that same evening, it surprised me, and made me uneasy, to see Mr. Micawber and Uriah Heep walk past arm in arm—Uriah humbly sensible of the honour that was done him, and Mr. Micawber taking a bland delight in extending his patronage to Uriah. But I was still more surprised when I went to the little hotel next day at the appointed dinner-hour, which was four o'clock, to find, from what Mr. Micawber said, that he had gone home with Uriah, and had drunk brandy-and-water at Mrs. Heep's.

"And I'll tell you what, my dear Copperfield," said Mr. Micawber, "your friend Heep is a young fellow who might be attorney-general. If I had known that young man at the period when my difficulties came to a crisis, all I can say is, that I believe my creditors would have been a great deal better managed than they were."

I hardly understood how this could have been, seeing that Mr. Micawber had paid them nothing at all as it was; but I did not like to ask. Neither did I like to say that I hoped he had not been too communicative to Uriah, or to inquire if they had talked much about me. I was afraid of hurting Mr. Micawber's feelings, or at all events, Mrs. Micawber's, she being very sensitive; but I was un-

comfortable about it, too, and often thought about it afterwards.

We had a beautiful little dinner—quite an elegant dish of fish, the kidney-end of a loin of veal roasted, fried sausage-meat, a partridge, and a pudding. There was wine, and there was strong ale; and after dinner, Mrs. Micawber made us a bowl of hot punch with her own hands.

Mr. Micawber was uncommonly convivial. I never saw him such good company. He made his face shine with the punch, so that it looked as if it had been varnished all over. He got cheerfully sentimental about the town, and proposed success to it; observing that Mrs. Micawber and himself had been made extremely snug and comfortable there, and that he never should forget the agreeable hours they had passed in Canterbury. He proposed me afterwards; and he, and Mrs. Micawber, and I, took a review of our past acquaintance, in the course of which we sold the property all over again. Then I proposed Mrs. Micawber—or, at least, said modestly, "If you'll allow me, Mrs. Micawber, I shall now have the pleasure of drinking your health, ma'am." On which Mr. Micawber delivered an eulogium on Mrs. Micawber's character, and said she had ever been his guide, philosopher, and friend; and that he would recommend me, when I came to a marrying-time of life, to marry such another woman, if such another woman could be found.

As the punch disappeared, Mr. Micawber became still more friendly and convivial. Mrs. Micawber's spirits becoming elevated, too, we sang "Auld Lang Syne." When we came to "Here's my trusty fiere," we all joined hands round the table; and when we declared we would "tak' a right gude willie-waught," and hadn't the least idea what it meant, we were really affected.

In a word, I never saw anybody so thoroughly jovial as Mr. Micawber was, down to the very last moment of the evening, when I took a hearty farewell of himself and his amiable wife. Consequently I was not prepared, at seven o'clock next morning, to receive the following communication, dated half-past nine in the evening, a quarter of an hour after I had left him:

"My Dear Young Friend:

"The die is cast—all is over. Hiding the ravages of care with a sickly mask of mirth, I have not informed you, this evening, that there is no hope of the remittance! Under these circumstances, alike humiliating to contemplate, and humiliating to relate, I have discharged the pecuniary liability contracted at this establishment by giving a note of hand, made payable fourteen days after date, at my residence, Pentonville, London. When it becomes due, it will not be taken up. The result is destruction. The bolt is impending, and the tree must fall.

"Let the wretched man who now addresses you, my dear Copperfield, be a beacon to you through life. He writes with that intention and in that hope. If he could think himself of so much use, one gleam of day might, by possibility, penetrate into the cheerless dungeon of his remaining existence — though his longevity is, at present (to say the least of it), extremely problematical.

"This is the last communication, my dear Copperfield, you will ever receive

"From

"The

"Beggared Outcast,

"Wilkins Micawber."

I was so shocked by the contents of this heart-rending letter that I ran off directly towards the little hotel, with the intention of taking it on my way to Doctor Strong's, and trying to soothe Mr. Micawber with a word of comfort. But, half-way there, I met the London coach, with Mr. and Mrs. Micawber up behind; Mr. Micawber, the very picture of tranquil enjoyment, smiling at Mrs. Micawber's conversation, eating walnuts out of a paper bag, with a bottle sticking out of his breast pocket. As they did not see me, I thought it best, all things considered, not to see them. So, with a great weight taken off my mind, I turned into a by-street that was the nearest way to school, and felt, upon the

whole, relieved that they were gone—though I still liked them very much, nevertheless.

Little David Seeks Aunt Betsy

The little David, his mother being dead, has in desperation run away from his domicile with the harsh Murdstones, and walked all the way to Dover, where resides his Aunt Betsy Trotwood—the one relative to whom he can appeal.

When I came, at last, upon the bare, wide downs near Dover, it relieved the solitary aspect of the scene with hope; and not until I reached that first great aim of my journey, and actually set foot in the town itself, on the sixth day of my flight, did it desert me. But then, strange to say, when I stood with my ragged shoes, and my dusty, sunburnt, half-clothed figure, in the place so long desired, it seemed to vanish like a dream, and to leave me helpless and dispirited.

I inquired about my aunt among the boatmen first, and received various answers. One said she lived in the South Foreland Light, and had singed her whiskers by doing so; another, that she was made fast to the great buoy outside the harbour, and could only be visited at half-tide; a third, that she was locked up in Maidstone Jail for child-stealing; a fourth, that she was seen to mount a broom, in the last high wind, and make direct for Calais. The

fly-drivers, among whom I inquired next, were equally jocose and equally disrespectful: and the shopkeepers, not liking my appearance, generally replied, without hearing what I had to say, that they had got nothing for me. I felt more miserable and destitute than I had done at any period of my running away. My money was all gone, I had nothing left to dispose of; I was hungry, thirsty, and worn out; and seemed as distant from my end as if I had remained in London.

The morning had worn away in these inquiries, and I was sitting on the step of an empty shop at a street corner, near the market-place, deliberating upon wandering towards those other places which had been mentioned, when a fly-driver, coming by with his carriage, dropped a horsecloth. Something good-natured in the man's face, as I handed it up, encouraged me to ask him if he could tell me where Miss Trotwood lived; though I had asked the question so often, that it almost died upon my lips.

"Trotwood," said he. "Let me see. I know the name, too. Old lady?"

"Yes," I said, "rather."

"Pretty stiff in the back?" said he, making himself upright.

"Yes," I said. "I should think it very likely."

"Carries a bag?" said he—"bag with a good deal of room in it—is gruffish, and comes down upon you, sharp?"

My heart sank within me as I acknowledged the undoubted accuracy of this description.

"Why then, I tell you what," said he. "If you go up there," pointing with his whip towards the heights, "and keep right on till you come to some houses facing the sea, I think you'll hear of her. My opinion is, she won't stand anything, so here's a penny for you."

I accepted the gift thankfully, and bought a loaf with it. Despatching this refreshment by the way, I went in the direction my friend had indicated, and walked on a good distance without coming to the houses he had mentioned. At length I saw some before me; and approaching them, went into a little shop (it was what we used to call a general shop, at home), and inquired if they could have the goodness to tell me where Miss Trotwood lived. I addressed myself to a man behind the counter, who was weighing some rice for a young woman; but the latter, taking the inquiry to herself, turned round quickly.

"My mistress?" she said. "What do you want with her, boy?"

"I want," I replied, "to speak to her, if you please."

"To beg of her, you mean," retorted the damsel.

"No," I said, "indeed." But suddenly remembering that in truth I came for no other purpose, I held my peace in confusion, and felt my face burn.

My aunt's handmaid, as I supposed she was from what she had said, put her rice in a little basket and walked out of the shop; telling me that I could follow her, if I wanted to know where Miss Trotwood lived. I needed no second permission; though I was by this time in such a state of consternation and agitation, that my legs shook under me. I followed the young woman, and we soon came to a very neat little cottage with cheerful bow-windows: in front of it, a small square gravelled court or garden full of flowers, carefully tended, and smelling deliciously.

"This is Miss Trotwood's," said the young woman. "Now you know; and that's all I have got to say." With which words she hurried into the house, as if to shake off the responsibility of my appearance; and left me standing at the garden-gate, looking disconsolately over the top of it towards the parlour-window, where a muslin curtain partly undrawn in the middle, a large round green screen or fan fastened on to the window-sill, a small table, and a great chair, suggested to me that my aunt might be at that moment seated in awful state.

My shoes were by this time in a woful condition. The soles had shed themselves bit by bit, and the upper leathers had broken and burst until the very shape and form of shoes had departed from them. My hat (which had served me for a nightcap, too) was so crushed and bent, that no old battered han-

dleless saucepan on a dunghill need have been ashamed to vie with it. My shirt and trousers, stained with heat, dew, grass, and the Kentish soil on which I had slept—and torn besides—might have frightened the birds from my aunt's garden, as I stood at the gate. My hair had known no comb or brush since I left London. My face, neck, and hands, from unaccustomed exposure to the air and sun, were burnt to a berry-brown. From head to foot, I was powdered almost as white with chalk and dust, as if I had come out of a lime-kiln. In this plight, and with a strong consciousness of it, I waited to introduce myself to, and make my first impression on, my formidable aunt.

The unbroken stillness of the parlour-window leading me to infer, after a while, that she was not there, I lifted up my eyes to the window above it, where I saw a florid, pleasant-looking gentleman, with a gray head, who shut up one eye in a grotesque manner, nodded his head at me several times, shook it at me as often, laughed, and went away.

I had been discomposed enough before; but I was so much the more discomposed by this unexpected behavior, that I was on the point of slinking off, to think how I had best proceed, when there came out of the house a lady with a handkerchief tied over her cap, and a pair of gardening gloves on her hands, wearing a gardening pocket like a tollman's apron, and carrying a great knife. I knew her im-

mediately to be Miss Betsey, for she came stalking out of the house exactly as my poor mother had so often described her stalking up our garden at Blunderstone Rookery.

"Go away!" said Miss Betsey, shaking her head, and making a distant chop in the air with her knife. "Go along! No boys here!"

I watched her, with my heart at my lips, as she marched to a corner of her garden, and stooped to dig up some little root there. Then, without a scrap of courage, but with a great deal of desperation, I went softly in and stood beside her, touching her with my finger.

"If you please, ma'am," I began.

She started and looked up.

"If you please, aunt."

"EH?" exclaimed Miss Betsey, in a tone of amazement I have never heard approached.

"If you please, aunt, I am your nephew."

"Oh, Lord!" said my aunt. And she sat flat down in the garden-path.

"I am David Copperfield, of Blunderstone, in Suffolk—where you came, on the night when I was born, and saw my dear mamma. I have been very unhappy since she died. I have been slighted, and taught nothing, and thrown upon myself, and put to work not fit for me. It made me run away to you. I was robbed at first setting out, and have walked all the way, and have never slept in a bed

since I began the journey." Here my self-support gave way all at once; and with a movement of my hands, intended to show her my ragged state, and call it to witness that I had suffered something, I broke into a passion of crying, which I suppose had been pent up within me all the week.

My aunt, with every sort of expression but wonder discharged from her countenance, sat on the gravel, staring at me, until I began to cry; when she got up in a great hurry, collared me, and took me into the parlour. Her first proceeding there was to unlock a tall press, bring out several bottles, and pour some of the contents of each into my mouth. I think they must have been taken out at random, for I am sure I tasted aniseed water, anchovy sauce, and salad dressing. When she had administered these restoratives, as I was still quite hysterical, and unable to control my sobs, she put me on the sofa, with a shawl under my head, and the handkerchief from her own head under my feet, lest I should sully the cover; and then, sitting herself down behind the green fan or screen I have already mentioned, so that I could not see her face, ejaculated at intervals, "Mercy on us!" letting those exclamations off like minute guns.

After a time she rang the bell. "Janet," said my aunt, when her servant came in. "Go upstairs, give my compliments to Mr. Dick, and say I wish to speak to him."

Janet looked a little surprised to see me lying stiffly on the sofa (I was afraid to move lest it should be displeasing to my aunt), but went on her errand. My aunt, with her hands behind her, walked up and down the room, until the gentleman who had squinted at me from the upper window came in laughing.

"Mr. Dick," said my aunt, "don't be a fool, because nobody can be more discreet than you can, when you choose. We all know that. So don't be a fool, whatever you are."

The gentleman was serious immediately, and looked at me, I thought, as if he would entreat me to say nothing about the window.

"Mr. Dick," said my aunt, "you have heard me mention David Copperfield? Now don't pretend not to have a memory, because you and I know better."

"David Copperfield?" said Mr. Dick, who did not appear to me to remember much about it. "*David* Copperfield? Oh yes, to be sure, David, certainly."

"Well," said my aunt, "this is his boy—his son. He would be as like his father as it's possible to be, if he was not so like his mother, too."

"His son?" said Mr. Dick. "David's son? Indeed!"

"Yes," pursued my aunt, "and he has done a pretty piece of business. He has run away. Ah!

His sister, Betsey Trotwood, never would have run away."

My aunt shook her head firmly, confident in the character and behavior of the girl who never was born.

"Oh! you think she wouldn't have run away?" said Mr. Dick.

"Bless and save the man," exclaimed my aunt, sharply, "how he talks! Don't I know she wouldn't? She would have lived with her god-mother, and we should have been devoted to one another. Where, in the name of wonder, should his sister, Betsey Trotwood, have run from, or to?"

"Nowhere," said Mr. Dick.

"Well then," returned my aunt, softened by the reply, "how can you pretend to be wool-gathering, Dick, when you are as sharp as a surgeon's lancet? Now, here you see young David Copperfield, and the question I put to you is, what shall I do with him?"

"What shall you do with him?" said Mr. Dick, feebly, scratching his head. "Oh! do with him?"

"Yes," said my aunt, with a grave look, and her forefinger held up. "Come! I want some very sound advice."

"Why, if I was you," said Mr. Dick, considering, and looking vacantly at me, "I should—" The contemplation of me seemed to inspire him with a sudden idea, and he added, briskly, "I should wash him!"

"Janet," said my aunt, turning round with a quiet triumph, which I did not then understand, "Mr. Dick sets us all right. Heat the bath!"

The Tempest at Yarmouth

As a young man, David visits the quaint fishing port of Yarmouth, where as a boy he has played with Little Emily in the curious house made out of a boat. Steerforth, David's false school friend, has run away with Emily and ruined her; Dan'l Peggotty has pursued the pair in order to rescue his darling; while the faithful fisherman, Ham, has remained at home sturdily doing his daily task, although heartbroken because Emily, whom he loved, is lost in a double sense.

I now approach an event in my life, so indelible, so awful, so bound by an infinite variety of ties to all that has preceded it, in these pages, that, from the beginning of my narrative, I have seen it growing larger and larger as I advanced, like a great tower in a plain, and throwing its fore-cast shadow even on the incidents of my childish days.

For years after it occurred, I dreamed of it often. I have started up so vividly impressed by it, that its fury has yet seemed raging in my quiet room, in the still night. I dream of it sometimes, though at lengthened and uncertain intervals, to this hour.

I have an association between it and a stormy wind, or the lightest mention of a sea-shore, as strong as any of which my mind is conscious. As plainly as I behold what happened, I will try to write it down. I do not recall it, but see it done; for it happens again before me.

The time drawing on rapidly for the sailing of the emigrant-ship, my good old nurse (almost broken-hearted for me, when we first met) came up to London. I was constantly with her, and her brother, and the Micawbers (they being very much together); but Emily I never saw.

One evening when the time was close at hand, I was alone with Peggotty and her brother. Our conversation turned on Ham. She described to us how tenderly he had taken leave of her, and how manfully and quietly he had borne himself. Most of all, of late, when she believed he was most tried. It was a subject of which the affectionate creature never tired; and our interest in hearing the many examples which she, who was so much with him, had to relate, was equal to hers in relating them.

My aunt and I were at that time vacating the two cottages at Highgate; I intending to go abroad, and she to return to her house at Dover. We had a temporary lodging in Covent Garden. As I walked home to it, after this evening's conversation, reflecting on what had passed between Ham and myself when I was last at Yarmouth, I wavered in

the original purpose I had formed, of leaving a letter for Emily when I should take leave of her uncle on board the ship, and thought it would be better to write to her now. She might desire, I thought, after receiving my communication, to send some parting word by me to her unhappy lover. I ought to give her the opportunity.

I therefore sat down in my room, before going to bed, and wrote to her. I told her that I had seen him, and that he had requested me to tell her what I have already written in its place in these sheets. I faithfully repeated it. I had no need to enlarge upon it, if I had had the right. Its deep fidelity and goodness were not to be adorned by me or any man. I left it out, to be sent round in the morning; with a line to Mr. Peggotty, requesting him to give it to her; and went to bed at daybreak.

I was weaker than I knew then; and, not falling asleep until the sun was up, lay late, and unrefreshed, next day. I was roused by the silent presence of my aunt at my bedside. I felt it in my sleep, as I suppose we all do feel such things.

"Trot, my dear," she said, when I opened my eyes, "I couldn't make up my mind to disturb you. Mr. Peggotty is here; shall he come up?"

I replied yes, and he soon appeared.

"Mas'r Davy," he said, when we had shaken hands, "I giv Em'ly your letter, sir, and she writ

this heer; and begged of me fur to ask you to read it, and if you see no hurt in't, to be so kind as take charge on't."

"Have you read it?" said I.

He nodded sorrowfully. I opened it, and read as follows:

"I have got your message. Oh, what can I write, to thank you for your good and blessed kindness to me!

"I have put the words close to my heart. I shall keep them till I die. They are sharp thorns, but they are such comfort. I have prayed over them, oh, I have prayed so much. When I find what you are, and what uncle is, I think what God must be, and can cry to Him.

"Good by for ever. Now, my dear, my friend, good by for ever in this world. In another world, if I am forgiven, I may wake a child, and come to you. All thanks and blessings. Farewell, evermore."

This, blotted with tears, was the letter.

"May I tell her as you doen't see no hurt in't, and as you'll be so kind as take charge on't, Mas'r Davy?" said Mr. Peggotty, when I had read it.

"Unquestionably," said I—"but I am thinking—"

"Yes, Mas'r Davy?"

"I am thinking," said I, "that I'll go down again to Yarmouth. There's time, and to spare, for me to go and come back before the ship sails. My

mind is constantly running on him, in his solitude; to put this letter of her writing in his hand at this time, and to enable you to tell her, in the moment of parting, that he has got it, will be a kindness to both of them. I solemnly accepted his commission, dear good fellow, and cannot discharge it too completely. The journey is nothing to me. I am restless, and shall be better in motion. I'll go down to-night."

Though he anxiously endeavored to dissuade me, I saw that he was of my mind; and this, if I had required to be confirmed in my intention, would have had the effect. He went round to the coach-office, at my request, and took the box-seat for me on the mail. In the evening I started, by that conveyance, down the road I had traversed under so many vicissitudes.

"Don't you think that," I asked the coachman, in the first stage out of London, "a very remarkable sky? I don't remember to have seen one like it."

"Nor I—not equal to it," he replied. "That's wind, sir. There'll be mischief done at sea, I expect, before long."

It was a murky confusion—here and there blotted with a colour like the colour of the smoke from damp fuel—of flying clouds tossed up into most remarkable heaps, suggesting greater heights in the clouds than there were depths below them to the bottom of the deepest hollows in the earth, through which the

mild moon seemed to plunge headlong, as if, in a dread disturbance of the laws of nature, she had lost her way and were frightened. There had been a wind all day, and it was rising then, with an extraordinary great sound. In another hour it had much increased, and the sky was more overcast, and it blew hard.

But, as the night advanced, the clouds closing in and densely overspreading the whole sky, then very dark, it came on to blow, harder and harder. It still increased, until our horses could scarcely face the wind. Many times, in the dark part of the night (it was then late in September, when the nights were not short), the leaders turned about, or came to a dead stop; and we were often in serious apprehension that the coach would be blown over. Sweeping gusts of rain came up before this storm like showers of steel; and at those times, when there was any shelter of trees or lee walls to be got, we were fain to stop, in a sheer impossibility of continuing the struggle.

When the day broke, it blew harder and harder. I had been to Yarmouth when the seamen said it blew great guns, but I had never known the like of this, or anything approaching to it. We came to Ipswich—very late, having had to fight every inch of ground since we were ten miles out of London; and found a cluster of people in the market-place, who had risen from their beds in the

night, fearful of falling chimneys. Some of these, congregating about the inn-yard while we changed horses, told us of great sheets of lead having been ripped off a high church-tower, and flung into a by-street, which they then blocked up. Others had to tell of country people, coming in from neighboring villages, who had seen great trees lying torn out of the earth, and whole ricks scattered about the roads and fields. Still there was no abatement in the storm, but it blew harder.

As we struggled on, nearer and nearer to the sea, from which this mighty wind was blowing dead on shore, its force became more and more terrific. Long before we saw the sea, its spray was on our lips, and showered salt rain upon us. The water was out, over miles and miles of the flat country adjacent to Yarmouth; and every sheet and puddle lashed its banks, and had its stress of little breakers setting heavily toward us. When we came within sight of the sea, the waves on the horizon, caught at intervals above the rolling abyss, were like glimpses of another shore with towers and buildings. When at last we got into the town, the people came out to their doors, all aslant, and with streaming hair, making a wonder of the mail that had come through such a night.

I put up at the old inn, and went down to look at the sea; staggering along the street, which was strewn with sand and sea-weed, and with flying

blotches of sea-foam; afraid of falling slates and tiles; and holding by people I met at angry corners. Coming near the beach, I saw, not only the boatmen, but half the people of the town, lurking behind buildings; some, now and then braving the fury of the storm to look away to sea, and blown sheer out of their course in trying to get zigzag back.

Joining these groups, I found bewailing women whose husbands were away in herring or oyster boats, which there was too much reason to think might have foundered before they could run in anywhere for safety. Grizzled old sailors were among the people, shaking their heads as they looked from water to sky, and muttering to one another; shipowners, excited and uneasy; children huddling together, and peering into older faces; even stout mariners disturbed and anxious, levelling their glasses at the sea from behind places of shelter, as if they were surveying an enemy.

The tremendous sea itself, when I could find sufficient pause to look at it, in the agitation of the blinding wind, the flying stones and sand, and the awful noise, confounded me. As the high watery walls came rolling in, and, at their highest, tumbled into surf, they looked as if the last would engulf the town. As the receding wave swept back with a hoarse roar, it seemed to scoop out deep caves in the beach, as if its purpose were to undermine the earth. When some white-headed billows thun-

dered on, and dashed themselves to pieces before they reached the land, every fragment of the late whole seemed possessed by the full might of its wrath, rushing to be gathered to the composition of another monster. Undulating hills were changed to valleys, undulating valleys (with a solitary storm-bird sometimes skimming through them) were lifted up to hills; masses of water shivered and shook the beach with a booming sound; every shape tumultuously rolled on, as soon as made, to change its shape and place, and beat another shape and place away; the ideal shore on the horizon, with its towers and buildings, rose and fell; the clouds flew fast and thick; I seemed to see a rending and upheaving of all nature.

Not finding Ham among the people whom this memorable wind—for it is still remembered down there as the greatest ever known to blow upon that coast—had brought together, I made my way to his house. It was shut; and as no one answered to my knocking, I went by back ways and by-lanes, to the yard where he worked. I learned, there, that he had gone to Lowestoft, to meet some sudden exigency of ship-repairing in which his skill was required; but that he would be back to-morrow morning in good time.

I went back to the inn; and when I had washed and dressed, and tried to sleep, but in vain, it was five o'clock in the afternoon. I had not sat five

minutes by the coffee-room fire, when the waiter coming to stir it, as an excuse for talking, told me that two colliers had gone down, with all hands, a few miles away; and that some other ships had been seen laboring hard in the Roads, and trying, in great distress, to keep off shore. Mercy on them, and on all poor sailors, said he, if we had another night like the last!

I was very much depressed in spirits; very solitary; and felt an uneasiness in Ham's not being there, disproportionate to the occasion. I was seriously affected, without knowing how much, by late events; and my long exposure to the fierce wind had confused me. There was that jumble in my thoughts and recollections, that I had lost the clear arrangement of time and distance. Thus, if I had gone out into the town, I should not have been surprised, I think, to encounter some one who I knew must be then in London. So to speak, there was in these respects a curious inattention in my mind. Yet it was busy, too, with all the remembrances the place naturally awakened; and they were particularly distinct and vivid.

In this state, the waiter's dismal intelligence about the ships immediately connected itself, without any effort of my volition, with my uneasiness about Ham. I was persuaded that I had an apprehension of his returning from Lowestoft by sea, and being lost. This grew so strong with me, that I resolved

to go back to the yard before I took my dinner, and ask the boat-builder if he thought his attempting to return by sea at all likely? If he gave me the least reason to think so, I would go over to Lowestoft and prevent it by bringing him with me.

I hastily ordered my dinner, and went back to the yard. I was none too soon; for the boat-builder, with a lantern in his hand, was locking the yard-gate. He quite laughed, when I asked him the question, and said there was no fear; no man in his senses, or out of them, would put off in such a gale of wind, least of all Ham Peggotty, who had been born to sea-faring.

So sensible of this, beforehand, that I had really felt ashamed of doing what I was nevertheless impelled to do, I went back to the inn. If such a wind could rise, I think it was rising. The howl and roar, the rattling of the doors and windows, the rumbling in the chimneys, the apparent rocking of the very house that sheltered me, and the prodigious tumult of the sea, were more fearful than in the morning. But there was now a great darkness besides; and that invested the storm with new terrors, real and fanciful.

I could not eat, I could not sit still, I could not continue steadfast to anything. Something within me, faintly answering to the storm without, tossed up the depths of my memory, and made a tumult in them. Yet, in all the hurry of my thoughts,

wild running with the thundering sea,—the storm and my uneasiness regarding Ham, were always in the foreground.

My dinner went away almost untasted, and I tried to refresh myself with a glass or two of wine. In vain. I fell into a dull slumber before the fire, without losing my consciousness, either of the uproar out of doors, or of the place in which I was. Both became overshadowed by a new and indefinable horror; and when I awoke—or rather when I shook off the lethargy that bound me in my chair—my whole frame thrilled with objectless and unintelligible fear.

I walked to and fro, tried to read an old gazetteer, listened to the awful noises; looked at faces, scenes, and figures in the fire. At length, the steady ticking of the undisturbed clock on the wall, tormented me to that degree that I resolved to go to bed.

It was reassuring, on such a night, to be told that some of the inn-servants had agreed together to sit up until morning. I went to bed, exceedingly weary and heavy; but on my lying down, all such sensations vanished, as if by magic, and I was broad awake, with every sense refined.

For hours I lay there, listening to the wind and water; imagining, now, that I heard shrieks out at sea; now, that I distinctly heard the firing of signal guns; and now, the fall of houses in the town. I got up, several times, and looked out; but could see

nothing, except the reflection in the window-panes of the faint candle I had left burning, and of my own haggard face looking in at me from the black void.

At length, my restlessness attained to such a pitch, that I hurried on my clothes, and went downstairs. In the large kitchen, where I dimly saw bacon and ropes of onions hanging from the beams, the watchers were clustered together, in various attitudes, about a table, purposely moved away from the great chimney, and brought near the door. A pretty girl, who had her ears stopped with her apron, and her eyes upon the door, screamed when I appeared, supposing me to be a spirit; but the others had more presence of mind, and were glad of an addition to their company. One man, referring to the topic they had been discussing, asked me whether I thought the souls of the collier-crews who had gone down, were out in the storm?

I remained there, I dare say, two hours. Once, I opened the yard-gate, and looked into the empty street. The sand, the sea-weed, and the flakes of foam, were driving by, and I was obliged to call for assistance before I could shut the gate again, and make it fast against the wind.

There was a dark gloom in my solitary chamber, when I at length returned to it; but I was tired now, and, getting into bed again, fell—off a tower and down a precipice—into the depths of sleep. I

have an impression that, for a long time, though I dreamed of being elsewhere and in a variety of scenes, it was always blowing in my dream. At length, I lost that feeble hold upon reality, and was engaged with two dear friends, but who they were I don't know, at the siege of some town in a roar of cannonading.

The thunder of the cannon was so loud and incessant, that I could not hear something I much desired to hear, until I made a great exertion and awoke. It was broad day—eight or nine o'clock; the storm raging, in lieu of the batteries; and some one knocking and calling at my door.

"What is the matter?" I cried.

"A wreck! Close by!"

I sprung out of bed, and asked what wreck?

"A schooner, from Spain or Portugal, laden with fruit and wine. Make haste, sir, if you want to see her! It's thought, down on the beach, she'll go to pieces every moment."

The excited voice went clamouring along the staircase; and I wrapped myself in my clothes as quickly as I could, and ran into the street.

Numbers of people were there before me, all running in one direction, to the beach. I ran the same way, outstripping a good many, and soon came facing the wild sea.

The wind might by this time have lulled a little, though not more sensibly than if the cannonading

I had dreamed of, had been diminished by the silencing of half-a-dozen guns out of hundreds. But, the sea, having upon it the additional agitation of the whole night, was infinitely more terrific than when I had seen it last. Every appearance it had then presented, bore the expression of being swelled; and the height to which the breakers rose, and, looking over one another, bore one another down, and rolled in, in interminable hosts, was most appalling.

In the difficulty of hearing anything but wind and waves, and in the crowd, and the unspeakable confusion, and my first breathless efforts to stand against the weather, I was so confused that I looked out to sea for the wreck, and saw nothing but the foaming heads of the great waves. A half-dressed boatman, standing next to me, pointed with his bare arm (a tattoo'd arrow on it, pointing in the same direction) to the left. Then, O great Heaven, I saw it, close in upon us!

One mast was broken short off, six or eight feet from the deck, and lay over the side, entangled in a maze of sail and rigging; and all that ruin, as the ship rolled and beat—which she did without a moment's pause, and with a violence quite inconceivable—beat the side as if it would stave it in. Some efforts were even then being made, to cut this portion of the wreck away; for, as the ship, which was broadside on, turned towards us in her rolling, I

plainly descried her people at work with axes, especially one active figure with long curling hair, conspicuous among the rest. But, a great cry, which was audible even above the wind and water, rose from the shore at this moment; the sea, sweeping over the rolling wreck, made a clean breach, and carried men, spars, casks, planks, bulwarks, heaps of such toys, into the boiling surge.

The second mast was yet standing, with the rags of a rent sail, and a wild confusion of broken cordage flapping to and fro. The ship had struck once, the same boatman hoarsely said in my ear, and then lifted in and struck again. I understood him to add that she was parting amidships, and I could readily suppose so, for the rolling and beating were too tremendous for any human work to suffer long. As he spoke, there was another great cry of pity from the beach; four men arose with the wreck out of the deep, clinging to the rigging of the remaining mast; uppermost, the active figure with the curling hair.

There was a bell on board; and as the ship rolled and dashed, like a desperate creature driven mad, now showing us the whole sweep of her deck, as she turned on her beam-ends towards the shore, now nothing but her keel, as she sprung wildly over and turned towards the sea, the bell rang; and its sound, the knell of those unhappy men, was borne towards us on the wind. Again we lost her, and

again she rose. Two men were gone. The agony on shore increased. Men groaned, and clasped their hands; women shrieked, and turned away their faces. Some ran wildly up and down along the beach, crying for help where no help could be. I found myself one of these, frantically imploring a knot of sailors whom I knew, not to let those two creatures perish before our eyes.

They were making out to me, in an agitated way—I don't know how, for the little I could hear I was scarcely composed enough to understand—that the life-boat had been bravely manned an hour ago, and could do nothing; and that as no man would be so desperate as to attempt to wade off with a rope, and establish a communication with the shore, there was nothing left to try; when I noticed that some new sensation moved the people on the beach, and saw them part, and Ham come breaking through them to the front.

I ran to him—as well as I know, to repeat my appeal for help. But, distracted though I was, by a sight so new to me and terrible, the determination in his face, and his look, out to sea—exactly the same look as I remembered in connection with the morning after Emily's flight—awoke me to a knowledge of his danger. I held him back with both arms; and implored the men with whom I had been speaking, not to listen to him, not to do murder, not to let him stir from off that sand!

Another cry arose on shore; and looking to the wreck, we saw the cruel sail, with blow on blow, beat off the lower of the two men, and fly up in triumph round the active figure left alone upon the mast.

Against such a sight, and against such determination as that of the calmly desperate man who was already accustomed to lead half the people present, I might as hopefully have entreated the wind. "Mas'r Davy," he said, cheerily grasping me by both hands, "if my time is come, 'tis come. If 'tan't, I'll bide it. Lord above bless you, and bless all! Mates, make me ready! I'm a going off!"

I was swept away, but not unkindly, to some distance, where the people around me made me stay; urging, as I confusedly perceived, that he was bent on going, with help or without, and that I should endanger the precautions for his safety by troubling those with whom they rested. I don't know what I answered, or what they rejoined; but, I saw hurry on the beach, and men running with ropes from a capstan that was there, and penetrating into a circle of figures that hid him from me. Then I saw him standing alone, in seaman's frock and trowsers: a rope in his hand, or slung to his wrist; another round his body: and several of the best men holding, at a little distance, to the latter, which he laid out himself, slack upon the shore, at his feet.

The wreck, even to my unpracticed eye, was breaking up. I saw that she was parting in the middle, and that the life of the solitary man upon the mast hung by a thread. Still, he clung to it. He had a singular red cap on,—not like a sailor's cap, but of a finer color; and as the few yielding planks between him and destruction rolled and bulged, and his anticipative death-knell rung, he was seen by all of us to wave it. I saw him do it now, and thought I was going distracted, when his action brought an old remembrance to my mind of a once dear friend.

Ham watched the sea, standing alone, with the silence of suspended breath behind him, and the storm before, until there was a great retiring wave, when, with a backward glance at those who held the rope which was made fast round his body, he dashed in after it, and in a moment was buffetting with the water; rising with the hills, falling with the valleys, lost beneath the foam; then drawn again to land. They hauled in hastily.

He was hurt. I saw blood on his face, from where I stood; but he took no thought of that. He seemed hurriedly to give some directions for leaving him more free—or so I judged from the motion of his arm—and was gone as before.

And now he made for the wreck, rising with the hills, falling with the valleys, lost beneath the rugged foam, borne in towards the shore, borne on towards

the ship, striving hard and valiantly. The distance was nothing, but the power of the sea and wind made the strife deadly. At length he neared the wreck. He was so near, that with one more of his vigorous strokes he would be clinging to it,—when, a high, green, vast hill-side of water, moving on shoreward, from beyond the ship, he seemed to leap up into it with a mighty bound, and the ship was gone!

Some eddying fragments I saw in the sea, as if a mere cask had been broken, in running to the spot where they were hauling in. Consternation was in every face. They drew him to my very feet —insensible—dead. He was carried to the nearest house; and, no one preventing me now, I remained near him, busy, while every means of restoration were tried; but he had been beaten to death by the great wave, and his generous heart was stilled for ever.

As I sat beside the bed, when hope was abandoned and all was done, a fisherman, who had known me when Emily and I were children, and ever since, whispered my name at the door.

"Sir," said he, with tears starting to his weather-beaten face, which, with his trembling lips, was ashy pale, "will you come over yonder?"

The old remembrance that had been recalled to me, was in his look. I asked him, terror-stricken, leaning on the arm he held out to support me:

"Has a body come ashore?"

He said, "Yes."

"Do I know it?" I asked then.

He answered nothing.

But he led me to the shore. And on that part of it where she and I had looked for shells, two children—on that part of it where some lighter fragments of the old boat, blown down last night, had been scattered by the wind—among the ruins of the home he had wronged—I saw him lying with his head upon his arm, as I had often seen him lie at school.

The selection affords a fine example of Dickens in his graver mood and possesses the mellow beauty of style which at his best he commanded. It has a reminiscent richness, together with the cumulative dramatic power which often make his climaxes impressive and effective. It explains his stage value.

BLEAK HOUSE

In this truly great piece of fiction, the author satirizes the proceedings of the Chancery Court, showing the chicanery and evasion which gather around the Chancery system of handling property. This serious satiric aim, however, does not prevent a somber melodramatic story from being crowded to overflowing with typical, delightful creatures of his imagination: Tulkinghorn and Guppy, Miss

Flite, poor little Jo, Krook and Smallweeds, Chadband and Mrs. Jellyby, Mrs. Snagsby and Stiggins, a rich gallery indeed. It is a big canvas, and the characters stand out in high relief. *Bleak House* is dramatic in method, atmospheric to a degree in tone. It showed Dickens at forty, in his prodigal young prime. He has never more successfully conveyed the sense of the romance of life and of human destiny.

Jo Passes On

Jo is in a sleep or in a stupor to-day, and Allan Woodcourt, newly arrived, stands by him, looking down upon his wasted form. After a while, he softly seats himself upon the bedside with his face towards him—just as he sat in the law-writer's room—and touches his chest and heart. The cart had very nearly given up, but labours on a little more.

The trooper stands in the doorway, still and silent. Phil has stopped in a low clinking noise, with his little hammer in his hand. Mr. Woodcourt looks round with that grave professional interest and attention on his face, and, glancing significantly at the trooper, signs to Phil to carry his table out. When the little hammer is next used, there will be a speck of rust upon it.

"Well, Jo! What is the matter? Don't be frightened."

"I thought," says Jo, who has started, and is looking round, "I thought I wos in Tom-all-Alone's agin. Ain't there nobody here but you, Mr. Woodcot?"

"Nobody."

"And I ain't took back to Tom-all-Alone's. Am I, sir?"

"No." Jo closes his eyes, muttering, "I'm wery thankful."

After watching him closely for a little while, Allan puts his mouth very near his ear, and says to him in a low, distinct voice:

"Jo! Did you ever know a prayer?"

"Never knowd nothink, sir."

"Not so much as one short prayer?"

"No, sir. Nothink at all. Mr. Chadbands he wos a-prayin wunst at Mr. Sangsby's and I heerd him, but he sounded as if he wos a-speakin to hisself, and not to me. He prayed a lot, but I couldn't make out nothink on it. Different times, there wos other genlmen come down Tom-all-Alone's a-prayin, but they all mostly sed as the t'other wuns prayed wrong, and all mostly sounded to be a-talkin to theirselves, or a-passin blame on the t'others, and not a-talkin to us. *We* never knowd nothink. I never knowd what it wos all about."

It takes him a long time to say this; and few but an experienced and attentive listener could hear, or, hearing, understand him. After a short relapse

into sleep or stupor, he makes, of a sudden, a strong effort to get out of bed.

"Stay, Jo! What now?"

"It's time for me to go to that there berryin ground, sir," he returns with a wild look.

"Lie down, and tell me. What burying ground, Jo?"

"Where they laid him as wos wery good to me, wery good to me indeed, he wos. It's time fur me to go down to that there berryin ground, sir, and ask to be put along with him. I wants to go there and be berried. He used fur to say to me, 'I am as poor as you to-day, Jo,' he ses. I wants to tell him that I am as poor as him now, and have come there to be laid along with him."

"By-and-bye, Jo. By-and-bye."

"Ah! P'raps they wouldn't do it if I wos to go myself. But will you promise to have me took there, sir, and laid along with him?"

"I will, indeed."

"Thank'ee, sir. Thank'ee, sir. They'll have to get the key of the gate afore they can take me in, for it's allus locked. And there's a step there, as I used fur to clean with my broom.—It's turned wery dark, sir. Is there any light a-comin?"

"It is coming fast, Jo."

Fast. The cart is shaken all to pieces, and the rugged road is very near its end.

"Jo, my poor fellow!"

"I hear you, sir, in the dark, but I'm a-gropin —a-gropin—let me catch hold of your hand."

"Jo, can you hear what I say?"

"I'll say anythink as you say, sir, fur I knows it's good."

"OUR FATHER."

"Our father!—yes, that's wery good, sir."

"WHICH ART IN HEAVEN."

"Art in Heaven—is the light a-comin, sir?"

"It is close at hand. HALLOWED BE THY NAME!"

"Hallowed be—thy—"

The light is come upon the dark benighted way. Dead!

Dead, your Majesty. Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Dead, men and women, born with Heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us every day.

Mr. Guppy Proposes

(The narrator here is Esther.)

Well! I was full of business, examining tradesmen's books, adding up columns, paying money, filing receipts, and I dare say making a great bustle about it, when Mr. Guppy was announced and shown in. I had had some idea that the clerk who

was to be sent down, might be the young gentleman who had met me at the coach-office; and I was glad to see him, because he was associated with my present happiness.

I scarcely knew him again, he was so uncommonly smart. He had an entirely new suit of glossy clothes on, a shining hat, lilac-kid gloves, a neckerchief of a variety of colours, a large hot-house flower in his button-hole, and a thick gold ring on his little finger. Besides which, he quite scented the dining-room with bear's-grease and other perfumery. He looked at me with an attention that quite confused me, when I begged him to take a seat until the servant should return, and as he sat there, crossing and uncrossing his legs in a corner, and I asked him if he had had a pleasant ride, and hoped that Mr. Kenge was well, I never looked at him, but I found him looking at me, in the same scrutinizing and curious way.

When the request was brought to him that he would go upstairs to Mr. Boythorn's room, I mentioned that he would find lunch prepared for him when he came down, of which Mr. Jarndyce hoped he would partake. He said with some embarrassment, holding the handle of the door, "Shall I have the honour of finding you here, miss?" I replied yes, I should be there; and he went out with a bow and another look.

I thought him only awkward and shy, for he was

evidently much embarrassed; and I fancied that the best thing I could do, would be to wait until I saw that he had everything he wanted, and then to leave him to himself. The lunch was soon brought, but it remained for some time on the table. The interview with Mr. Boythorn was a long one—and a stormy one too, I should think; for although his room was at some distance, I heard his loud voice every now and then like a high wind, and evidently blowing perfect broadsides of denunciation.

At last Mr. Guppy came back, looking something the worse for the conference. "My eye, miss," he said in a low voice, "he's a Tartar!"

"Pray take some refreshment, sir," said I.

Mr. Guppy sat down at the table, and began nervously sharpening the carving-knife on the carving-fork; still looking at me (as I felt quite sure without looking at him), in the same unusual manner. The sharpening lasted so long, that at last I felt a kind of obligation on me to raise my eyes, in order that I might break the spell under which he seemed to labour, of not being able to leave off.

He immediately looked at the dish, and began to carve.

"What will you take yourself, miss? You'll take a morsel of something?"

"No, thank you," said I.

"Shan't I give you a piece of anything at all, miss?" said Mr. Guppy, hurriedly drinking off a glass of wine.

"Nothing, thank you," said I. "I have only waited to see that you have everything you want. Is there anything I can order for you?"

"No, I am much obliged to you, miss, I'm sure. I've everything that I can require to make me comfortable—at least I—not comfortable—I'm never that:" he drank off two more glasses of wine, one after another.

I thought I had better go.

"I beg your pardon, miss!" said Mr. Guppy, rising, when he saw me rise. "But would you allow me the favour of a minute's private conversation?"

Not knowing what to say, I sat down again.

"What follows is without prejudice, miss?" said Mr. Guppy, anxiously bringing a chair towards my table.

"I don't understand what you mean," said I, wondering.

"It's one of our law terms, miss. You won't make any use of it to my detriment, at Kenge and Carboy's, or elsewhere. If our conversation shouldn't lead to anything, I am to be as I was, and am not to be prejudiced in my situation or worldly prospects. In short, it's in total confidence."

"I am at a loss, sir," said I, "to imagine what you can have to communicate in total confidence to me, whom you have never seen but once; but I should be very sorry to do you any injury."

"Thank you, miss. I'm sure of it—that's quite sufficient." All this time Mr. Guppy was either planing his forehead with his handkerchief, or tightly rubbing the palm of his left hand with the palm of his right. "If you would excuse my taking another glass of wine, miss, I think it might assist me in getting on, without a continual choke that cannot fail to be mutually unpleasant."

He did so, and came back again. I took the opportunity of moving well behind my table.

"You wouldn't allow me to offer you one, would you, miss?" said Mr. Guppy, apparently refreshed.

"Not any," said I.

"Not half a glass?" said Mr. Guppy; "quarter? No! Then, to proceed. My present salary, Miss Summerson, at Kenge and Carboy's, is two pound a week. When I first had the happiness of looking upon you, it was one-fifteen, and had stood at that figure for a lengthened period. A rise of five has since taken place, and a further rise of five is guaranteed at the expiration of a term not exceeding twelve months from the present date. My mother has a little property, which takes the form of a small life annuity; upon which she lives in an independent though unassuming manner, in the Old Street Road. She is eminently calculated for a mother-in-law. She never interferes, is all for peace, and her disposition easy. She has her failings—as who has not?—but I never knew her to

do it when company was present; at which time you may freely trust her with wines, spirits, or malt liquors. My own abode is lodgings at Penton Place, Pentonville. It is lowly, but airy, open at the back, and considered one of the 'ealthiest outlets. Miss Summerson! In the mildest language, I adore you. Would you be so kind as to allow me (as I may say) to file a declaration—to make an offer!"

Mr. Guppy went down on his knees. I was well behind my table, and not much frightened. I said, "Get up from that ridiculous position immediately, sir, or you will oblige me to break my implied promise and ring the bell!"

"Hear me out, miss!" said Mr. Guppy, folding his hands.

"I cannot consent to hear another word, sir," I returned, "unless you get up from the carpet directly, and go and sit down at the table, as you ought to do if you have any sense at all."

He looked piteously, but slowly rose and did so.

"Yet what a mockery it is, miss," he said, with his hand upon his heart, and shaking his head at me in a melancholy manner over the tray, "to be stationed behind food at such a moment. The soul recoils from food at such a moment, miss."

"I beg you to conclude," said I; "you have asked me to hear you out, and I beg you to conclude."

"I will, miss," said Mr. Guppy. "As I love and honour, so likewise I obey. Would that I could

make Thee the subject of that vow, before the shrine!"

"That is quite impossible," said I, "and entirely out of the question."

"I am aware," said Mr. Guppy, leaning forward over the tray, and regarding me, as I again strangely felt, though my eyes were not directed at him, with his late intent look, "I am aware that in worldly point of view, according to all appearances, my offer is a poor one. But, Miss Summerson! Angel! —No, don't ring—I have been brought up in a sharp school, and am accustomed to a variety of general practice. Though a young man, I have ferreted out evidence, got up cases, and seen lots of life. Blest with your hand, what means might I not find of advancing your interests, and pushing your fortunes! What might I not get to know, nearly concerning you? I know nothing now, certainly; but what *might* I not, if I had your confidence, and you set me on?"

I told him that he addressed my interest, or what he supposed to be my interest, quite as unsuccessfully as he addressed my inclination; and he would now understand that I requested him, if he pleased, to go away immediately.

"Cruel miss," said Mr. Guppy, "hear but another word! I think you must have seen that I was struck with those charms, on the day when I waited at the Whytorseller. I think you must have remarked

that I could not forbear a tribute to those charms when I put up the steps of the 'ackney-coach. It was a feeble tribute to Thee, but it was well meant. Thy image has ever since been fixed in my breast. I have walked up and down, of an evening, opposite Jellyby's house, only to look upon the bricks that once contained Thee. This out of to-day, quite an unnecessary out so far as the attendance, which was its pretended object, went, was planned by me alone for Thee alone. If I speak of interest, it is only to recommend myself and my respectful wretchedness. Love was before it, and is before it."

"I should be pained, Mr. Guppy," said I, rising and putting my hand upon the bell-rope, "to do you, or any one who was sincere, the injustice of slighting any honest feeling, however disagreeably expressed. If you have really meant to give me a proof of your good opinion, though ill-timed and misplaced, I feel that I ought to thank you. I have very little reason to be proud, and I am not proud. I hope," I think I added, without very well knowing what I said, "that you will now go away as if you had never been so exceedingly foolish, and attend to Messrs. Kenge and Carboy's business."

"Half a minute, miss!" cried Mr. Guppy, checking me as I was about to ring. "This has been without prejudice?"

"I will never mention it," said I, "unless you should give me future occasion to do so."

"A quarter of a minute, miss! In case you should think better—at any time, however distant, *that's* no consequence, for my feelings can never alter—of anything I have said, particularly what might I not do—Mr. William Guppy, eighty-seven, Penton Place, or if removed, or dead (of blighted hopes or anything of that sort), care of Mrs. Guppy, three hundred and two, Old Street Road, will be sufficient."

HARD TIMES

Hard Times, though of secondary importance as a story and work of art, is a truly significant work because of its educational suggestion. In this book, Dickens exhibits his scorn of the old-fashioned, cold and cruel system of education whereby the child is bully-ragged into a mechanical use of the memory, instead of being unfolded naturally in his latent powers through sympathy and love. Mr. Gradgrind is a famous impersonation of this old-time false pseudo-ideal of education.

Mr. Gradgrind Orates

I

"Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of rea-

soning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle upon which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, Sir!"

The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom, and the speaker's square forefinger emphasized his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster's sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's square wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellarage in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's mouth, which was wide, thin, and hard set. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's voice, which was inflexible, dry, and dictatorial. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface, all covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum pie, as if the head had scarcely warehouse-room for the hard facts stored inside. The speaker's obstinate carriage, square coat, square legs, square shoulders—nay, his very neckcloth, trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was,—all helped the emphasis.

"In this life, we want nothing but Facts, Sir; nothing but Facts!"

The speaker, and the schoolmaster, and the third grown person present, all backed a little, and swept with their eyes the inclined plane of little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim.

II

Thomas Gradgrind, Sir. A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing for anything over. Thomas Gradgrind, Sir — peremptorily Thomas — Thomas Gradgrind. With a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, Sir, ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to. It is a mere question of figures, a case of simple arithmetic. You might hope to get some other nonsensical belief into the head of George Gradgrind, or Augustus Gradgrind, or John Gradgrind, or Joseph Gradgrind (all supposititious, non-existent persons), but into the head of Thomas Gradgrind—no, Sir!

In such terms Mr. Gradgrind always mentally introduced himself, whether to his private circle of acquaintance, or to the public in general. In such terms, no doubt, substituting the words "boys and

girls," for "Sir," Thomas Gradgrind now presented Thomas Gradgrind to the little pitchers before him, who were to be filled so full of facts.

Indeed, as he eagerly sparkled at them from the cellarage before mentioned, he seemed a kind of cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts, and prepared to blow them clean out of the regions of childhood at one discharge. He seemed a galvanizing apparatus, too, charged with a grim mechanical substitute for the tender young imaginations that were to be stormed away.

"Girl number twenty," said Mr. Gradgrind, squarely pointing with his square forefinger, "I don't know that girl. Who is that girl?"

"Sissy Jupe, Sir," explained number twenty, blushing, standing up, and curtseying.

"Sissy is not a name," said Mr. Gradgrind. "Don't call yourself Sissy. Call yourself Cecilia."

"It's father as calls me Sissy, Sir," returned the young girl in a trembling voice, and with another curtsey.

"Then he has no business to do it," said Mr. Gradgrind. "Tell him he mustn't. Cecilia Jupe. Let me see. What is your father?"

"He belongs to the horse-riding, if you please, Sir."

Mr. Gradgrind frowned, and waved off the objectionable calling with his hand.

"We don't want to know anything about that, here. You mustn't tell us about that, here. Your father breaks horses, don't he?"

"If you please, Sir, when they can get any to break, they do break horses in the ring, Sir."

"You mustn't tell us about the ring, here. Very well, then. Describe your father as a horsebreaker. He doctors sick horses, I dare say?"

"Oh yes, Sir."

"Very well, then. He is a veterinary surgeon, a farrier, and horsebreaker. Give me your definition of a horse."

(Sissy Jupe thrown into the greatest alarm by this demand.)

"Girl number twenty unable to define a horse!" said Mr. Gradgrind, for the general behoof of all the little pitchers. "Girl number twenty possessed of no facts, in reference to one of the commonest of animals! Some boy's definition of a horse. Bitzer, yours."

The square finger, moving here and there, lighted suddenly on Bitzer, perhaps because he chanced to sit in the same ray of sunlight which, darting in at one of the bare windows of the intensely whitewashed room, irradiated Sissy. For, the boys and girls sat on the face of the inclined plane in two compact bodies, divided up the centre by a narrow interval; and Sissy, being at the corner of a row on the sunny

side, came in for the beginning of a sunbeam, of which Bitzer, being at the corner of a row on the other side, a few rows in advance, caught the end. But, whereas the girl was so dark-eyed and dark-haired, that she seemed to receive a deeper and more lustrous colour from the sun, when it shone upon her, the boy was so light-eyed and light-haired that the self-same rays appeared to draw out of him what little colour he ever possessed. His cold eyes would hardly have been eyes, but for the short ends of lashes which, by bringing them into immediate contrast with something paler than themselves, expressed their form. His short-cropped hair might have been a mere continuation of the sandy freckles on his forehead and face. His skin was so unwholesomely deficient in the natural tinge, that he looked as though, if he were cut, he would bleed white.

"Bitzer," said Thomas Gradgrind. "Your definition of a horse."

"Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth." Thus (and much more) Bitzer.

"Now, girl number twenty," said Mr. Gradgrind. "You know what a horse is."

LITTLE DORRIT

Little Dorrit has never been ranked among the major successes of the author, but the picture of the Marshalsea prison, and of the Father of the Marshalsea, who is a free-hand study of the novelist's own parent at the time when he was confined in that place of detention for debt, is one of the finest characterizations and pieces of writing that has come from his pen. Here also is the keen satiric sketch of the Circumlocutionary Office, in which the absurd pomposity and red tape of officialdom is so capitally hit off. Those who have had most to do in our day with any large business organization will be readiest to recognize the essential truth of such a satire.

The Father of the Marshalsea

Thirty years ago there stood, a few doors south of the church of Saint George, in the borough of Southwark, on the left-hand side of the way going southward, the Marshalsea Prison. It had stood there many years before, and it remained there some years afterwards; but it is gone now, and the world is none the worse without it.

It was an oblong pile of barrack building, partitioned into squalid houses standing back to back, so that there were no back rooms; environed by a

narrow paved yard, hemmed in by high walls duly spiked at top. Itself a close and confined prison for debtors, it contained within it a much closer and more confined jail for smugglers. Offenders against the revenue laws, and defaulters to excise or customs, who had incurred fines which they were unable to pay, were supposed to be incarcerated behind an iron-plated door, closing up a second prison, consisting of a strong cell or two, and a blind alley some yard and a half wide, which formed the mysterious termination of the very limited skittle-ground in which the Marshalsea debtors bowled down their troubles.

Supposed to be incarcerated there, because the time had rather outgrown the strong cells and the blind alley. In practice they had come to be considered a little too bad, though in theory they were quite as good as ever; which may be observed to be the case at the present day with other cells that are not at all strong, and with other blind alleys that are stone-blind. Hence the smugglers habitually consorted with the debtors (who received them with open arms), except at certain constitutional moments when somebody came from some Office, to go through some form of overlooking something which neither he nor anybody else knew anything about. On those truly British occasions, the smugglers, if any, made a feint of walking into the strong cells and the blind alley, while this somebody pre-

tended to do his something; and made a reality of walking out again as soon as he hadn't done it—neatly epitomising the administration of most of the public affairs in our right little, tight little island.

There had been taken to the Marshalsea Prison, long before the day when the sun shone on Marseilles and on the opening of this narrative, a debtor with whom this narrative has some concern.

He was, at that time, a very amiable and very helpless middle-aged gentleman, who was going out again directly. Necessarily, he was going out again directly, because the Marshalsea lock never turned upon a debtor who was not. He brought in a portmanteau with him, which he doubted its being worth while to unpack; he was so perfectly clear—like all the rest of them, the turnkey on the lock said—that he was going out again directly.

He was a shy, retiring man; well-looking, though in an effeminate style; with a mild voice, curling hair, and irresolute hands—rings upon the fingers in those days—which nervously wandered to his trembling lip a hundred times, in the first half-hour of his acquaintance with the jail. His principal anxiety was about his wife.

"Do you think, sir," he asked the turnkey, "that she will be very much shocked, if she should come to the gate to-morrow morning?"

The turnkey gave it as the result of his experience that some of 'em was and some of 'em wasn't. In

general, more no than yes. "What like is she, you see?" he philosophically asked: "that's what it hinges on."

"She is very delicate and inexperienced indeed."

"That," said the turnkey, "is agen her."

"She is so little used to go out alone," said the debtor, "that I am at a loss to think how she will ever make her way here, if she walks."

"P'raps," quoth the turnkey, "she'll take a 'ackney-coach."

"Perhaps." The irresolute fingers went to the trembling lip. "I hope she will. She may not think of it."

"Or p'raps," said the turnkey, offering his suggestions from the top of his well-worn wooden stool, as he might have offered them to a child for whose weakness he felt a compassion, "p'raps she'll get her brother, or her sister, to come along with her."

"She has no brother or sister."

"Niece, nevy, cousin, serwant, young 'ooman, greengrocer.—Dash it! One or another on 'em," said the turnkey, repudiating beforehand the refusal of all his suggestions.

"I fear—I hope it is not against the rules—that she will bring the children."

"The children?" said the turnkey. "And the rules? Why, lord set you up like a corner pin, we've a reg'lar play-ground o' children here. Chil-

dren? Why, we swarm with 'em. How many a you got?"

"Two," said the debtor, lifting his irresolute hand to his lip again, and turning into the prison.

The turnkey followed him with his eyes. "And you another," he observed to himself, "which makes three on you. And your wife another, I'll lay a crown. Which makes four on you. And another coming, I'll lay half-a-crown. Which'll make five on you. And I'll go another seven and six-pence to name which is the helplessest, the unborn baby or you!"

He was right in all his particulars. She came next day with a little boy of three years old, and a little girl of two, and he stood entirely corroborated.

"Got a room now, haven't you?" the turnkey asked the debtor after a week or two.

"Yes, I have got a very good room."

"Any little sticks a-coming, to furnish it?" said the turnkey.

"I expect a few necessary articles of furniture to be delivered by the carrier, this afternoon."

"Missus and little 'uns a-coming to keep you company?" asked the turnkey.

"Why, yes, we think it better that we should not be scattered, even for a few weeks."

"Even for a few weeks, *of* course," replied the

turnkey. And he followed him again with his eyes, and nodded his head seven times when he was gone.

The affairs of this debtor were perplexed by a partnership, of which he knew no more than that he had invested money in it; by legal matters of assignment and settlement, conveyance here and conveyance there, suspicion of unlawful preference of creditors in this direction, and of mysterious spiriting away of property in that; and as nobody on the face of the earth could be more incapable of explaining any single item in the heap of confusion than the debtor himself, nothing comprehensible could be made of his case. To question him in detail, and endeavour to reconcile his answers; to closet him with accountants and sharp practitioners, learned in the wiles of insolvency and bankruptcy; was only to put the case out at compound interest of incomprehensibility. The irresolute fingers fluttered more and more ineffectually about the trembling lip on every such occasion, and the sharpest practitioners gave him up as a hopeless job.

"Out?" said the turnkey, *"he'll* never get out. Unless his creditors take him by the shoulders and shove him out."

He had been there five or six months, when he came running to this turnkey one forenoon to tell him, breathless and pale, that his wife was ill.

"As anybody might have known she would be," said the turnkey.

"We intended," he returned, "that she should go to a country lodging only to-morrow. What am I to do! Oh, good heaven, what am I to do!"

"Don't waste your time in clasping your hands and biting your fingers," responded the practical turnkey, taking him by the elbow, "but come along with me."

The turnkey conducted him — trembling from head to foot, and constantly crying under his breath, What was he to do! while his irresolute fingers bedabbled the tears upon his face—up one of the common staircases in the prison, to a door on the garret story. Upon which door the turnkey knocked with the handle of his key.

"Come in!" cried a voice inside.

The turnkey opening the door, disclosed in a wretched, ill-smelling little room, two hoarse, puffy, red-faced personages seated at a rickety table, playing at all-fours, smoking pipes, and drinking brandy.

"Doctor," said the turnkey, "here's a gentleman's wife in want of you without a minute's loss of time!"

The doctor's friend was in the positive degree of hoarseness, puffiness, red-facedness, all-fours, tobacco, dirt, and brandy; the doctor in the comparative—hoarser, puffier, more red-faced, more all-fourey, tobaccoer, dirtier, and brandier. The

doctor was amazingly shabby, in a torn and darned rough-weather sea-jacket, out at elbows and eminently short of buttons (he had been in his time the experienced surgeon carried by a passenger ship), the dirtiest white trousers conceivable by mortal man, carpet slippers, and no visible linen. "Child-bed?" said the doctor. "I'm the boy!" With that the doctor took a comb from the chimney-piece and stuck his hair upright—which appeared to be his way of washing himself—produced a professional chest or case, of most abject appearance, from the cupboard where his cup and saucer and coals were, settled his chin in the frowsy wrapper round his neck, and became a ghastly medical scarecrow.

The doctor and the debtor ran down-stairs, leaving the turnkey to return to the lock, and made for the debtor's room. All the ladies in the prison had got hold of the news, and were in the yard. Some of them had already taken possession of the two children, and were hospitably carrying them off; others were offering loans of little comforts from their own scanty store; others were sympathising with the greatest volubility. The gentlemen prisoners, feeling themselves at a disadvantage, had for the most part retired, not to say sneaked, to their rooms; from the open windows of which some of them now complimented the doctor with whistles as he passed below, while others, with several stories

between them, interchanged sarcastic references to the prevalent excitement.

Now, the debtor was a very different man from the doctor, but he had already begun to travel, by his opposite segment of the circle, to the same point. Crushed at first by his imprisonment, he had soon found a dull relief in it. He was under lock and key; but the lock and key that kept him in, kept numbers of his troubles out. If he had been a man with strength of purpose to face those troubles and fight them, he might have broken the net that held him, or broken his heart; but being what he was, he languidly slipped into this smooth descent, and never more took one step upward.

When he was relieved of the perplexed affairs that nothing would make plain, through having them returned upon his hands by a dozen agents in succession who could make neither beginning, middle, nor end of them or him, he found his miserable place of refuge a quieter refuge than it had been before. He had unpacked the portmanteau long ago; and his elder children now played regularly about the yard, and everybody knew the baby, and claimed a kind of proprietorship in her.

"Why, I'm getting proud of you," said his friend the turnkey, one day. "You'll be the oldest inhabitant soon. The Marshalsea wouldn't be like the Marshalsea now, without you and your family."

The turnkey really was proud of him. He would

mention him in laudatory terms to new-comers, when his back was turned. "You took notice of him," he would say, "that went out of the Lodge just now?"

New-comer would probably answer Yes.

"Brought up as a gentleman, he was, if ever a man was. Ed'cated at no end of expense. Went into the Marshal's house once, to try a new piano for him. Played it, I understand, like one o'clock —beautiful! As to languages—speaks anything. We've had a Frenchman here in his time, and it's my opinion he knowed more than the Frenchman did. We've had an Italian here in his time, and he shut *him* up in about half a minute. You'll find some characters behind other locks, I don't say you won't; but if you want the top sawyer, in such respects as I've mentioned, you must come to the Marshalsea."

When his youngest child was eight years old, his wife, who had long been languishing away—of her own inherent weakness, not that she retained any greater sensitiveness as to her place of abode than he did—went upon a visit to a poor friend and old nurse in the country, and died there. He remained shut up in his room for a fortnight afterwards; and an attorney's clerk, who was going through the Insolvent Court, engrossed an address of condolence to him, which looked like a Lease, and which all the prisoners signed. When he appeared

again he was greyer (he had soon begun to turn grey); and the turnkey noticed that his hands went often to his trembling lips again, as they had used to do when he first came in. But he got pretty well over it in a month or two; and in the meantime the children played about the yard as regularly as ever, but in black.

Then Mrs. Bangham, long popular medium of communication with the outer world, began to be infirm, and to be found oftener than usual comatose on pavements, with her basket of purchases spilt, and the change of her clients nine-pence short. His son began to supersede Mrs. Bangham, and to execute commissions in a knowing manner, and to be of the prison prisonous and of the street streety.

Time went on, and the turnkey began to fail. His chest swelled and his legs got weak, and he was short of breath. The well-worn wooden stool was "beyond him," he complained. He sat in an arm-chair with a cushion, and sometimes wheezed so, for minutes together, that he couldn't turn the key. When he was overpowered by these fits, the debtor often turned it for him.

"You and me," said the turnkey, one snowy winter's night, when the lodge, with a bright fire in it, was pretty full of company, "is the oldest inhabitants. I wasn't here myself above seven years before you. I shan't last long. When I'm off the lock for good and all, you'll be the Father of the Marshalsea."

The turnkey went off the lock of this world, next day. His words were remembered and repeated; and tradition afterwards handed down from generation to generation — a Marshalsea generation might be calculated as about three months—that the shabby old debtor with the soft manner and the white hair was the Father of the Marshalsea.

And he grew to be proud of the title. If any impostor had arisen to claim it, he would have shed tears in resentment of the attempt to deprive him of his rights. A disposition began to be perceived in him, to exaggerate the number of years he had been there; it was generally understood that you must deduct a few from his account; he was vain, the fleeting generation of debtors said.

All new-comers were presented to him. He was punctilious in the exaction of this ceremony. The wits would perform the office of introduction with overcharged pomp and politeness, but they could not easily overstep his sense of its gravity. He received them in his poor room (he disliked an introduction in the mere yard, as informal—a thing that might happen to anybody), with a kind of bowed-down beneficence. They were welcome to the Marshalsea, he would tell them. Yes, he was the Father of the place. So the world was kind enough to call him; and so he was, if more than twenty years of residence gave him a claim to the title. It looked small at first, but there was very

good company there—among a mixture—necessarily a mixture—and very good air.

It became a not unusual circumstance for letters to be put under his door at night, enclosing half-a-crown, two half-crowns, now and then at long intervals even half-a-sovereign, for the Father of the Marshalsea. "With the compliments of a collegian taking leave." He received the gifts as tributes from admirers to a public character. Sometimes these correspondents assumed facetious names, as the Brick, Bellows, Old Gooseberry, Wideawake, Snooks, Mops, Cutaway, the Dogs-meat Man; but he considered this in bad taste, and was always a little hurt by it.

In the fulness of time, this correspondence showing signs of wearing out, and seeming to require an effort on the part of the correspondent to which in the hurried circumstances of departure many of them might not be equal, he established the custom of attending collegians of a certain standing to the gate, and taking leave of them there. The collegian under treatment, after shaking hands, would occasionally stop to wrap up something in a bit of paper, and would come back again, calling "Hi!"

He would look round surprised. "Me?" he would say, with a smile.

By this time the collegian would be up with him, and he would paternally add, "What have you forgotten? What can I do for you?"

"I forgot to leave this," the collegian would usually return, "for the Father of the Marshalsea."

"My good sir," he would rejoin, "he is infinitely obliged to you." But, to the last, the irresolute hand of old would remain in the pocket into which he had slipped the money, during two or three turns about the yard, lest the transaction should be too conspicuous to the general body of collegians.

One afternoon he had been doing the honours of the place to a rather large party of collegians who happened to be going out, when, as he was coming back, he encountered one from the poor side who had been taken in execution for a small sum a week before, had "settled" in the course of that afternoon, and was going out too. The man was a mere Plasterer in his working dress; had his wife with him, and a bundle; and was in high spirits.

"God bless you, sir," he said in passing.

"And you," benignantly returned the Father of the Marshalsea.

They were pretty far divided, going their several ways, when the Plasterer called out, "I say!—sir!" and came back to him.

"It an't much," said the Plasterer, putting a little pile of halfpence in his hand, "but it's well meant."

The Father of the Marshalsea had never been offered tribute in copper yet. His children often had, and with his perfect acquiescence it had gone into the common purse, to buy meat that he had

eaten, and drink that he had drunk; but fustian splashed with white lime, bestowing halfpence on him, front to front, was new.

"How dare you!" he said to the man, and feebly burst into tears.

The Plasterer turned him towards the wall, that his face might not be seen; and the action was so delicate, and the man was so penetrated with repentance, and asked pardon so honestly, that he could make him no less acknowledgment than, "I know you meant it kindly. Say no more."

"Bless your soul, sir," urged the Plasterer, "I did indeed. I'd do more by you than the rest of 'em do, I fancy."

"What would you do?" he asked.

"I'd come back to see you, after I was let out."

"Give me the money again," said the other eagerly, "and I'll keep it, and never spend it. Thank you for it, thank you! I shall see you again?"

"If I live a week, you shall."

They shook hands and parted. The collegians, assembled in Symposium in the Snuggery that night, marvelled what had happened to their Father; he walked so late in the shadows of the yard, and seemed so downcast.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

A Tale of Two Cities takes high rank among the few historical romances of English speech; not so

perfect a thing as Thackeray's *Henry Esmond,* it certainly can be put in favorable comparison with Eliot's *Romola,*—and what is more important, is a picturesque and powerful presentation of salient aspects of the French Revolution. The theme of Carton's sacrifice of himself for another—one of the eternal themes—keeps its thrill, whether on the printed page or on the boards of a theater. Nevertheless, the judicious student of Dickens must acknowledge that this romance is less typical of the author than any one of half a dozen books that can be named, for the excellent reason that it is almost entirely devoid of the comic scene and character portrayal which are so distinctive of Charles Dickens. The somber atmosphere of the tale befits the subject-matter, yet seems unlike the creator of Pecksniff, Micawber, and Sarah Gamp. I have already suggested a possible cause for this peculiar change of tone; a reason perhaps subjective rather than artistic merely. The reader is advised, however, to make himself familiar with this fine story, not only for enjoyment's sake, but to get an increasing sense of Dickens's scope and variety. He has here taken the conventional formula of melodramatic adventure fiction and wrought with it to a result of picturesqueness and power. And the theme of sacrifice as such is one germane to the genius of an author who throughout his work lays emphasis upon the nobler aspects of humanity. Yet the knower of

Dickens, those who recognize what he was called into the world especially to do, can not but miss in such a creation that gusto of spirits, and that saliency of setting off the humorsome foibles of men, which, after all, and above all else, make this writer a unique contributor to the story-telling that is English.

The Footsteps Die Out Forever

Along the Paris streets, the death-carts rumble, hollow and harsh. Six tumbrils carry the day's wine to La Guillotine. All the devouring and insatiate Monsters imagined since imagination could record itself, are fused in the one realisation, Guillotine. And yet there is not in France, with its rich variety of soil and climate, a blade, a leaf, a root, a spring, a peppercorn, which will grow to maturity under conditions more certain than those that have produced this horror. Crush humanity out of shape once more, under similar hammers, and it will twist itself into the same tortured forms. Sow the same seed of rapacious license and oppression over again, and it will surely yield the same fruit according to its kind.

Six tumbrils roll along the streets. Change these back again to what they were, thou powerful enchanter, Time, and they shall be seen to be the carriages of absolute monarchs, the equipages of feudal nobles, the toilettes of flaring Jezebels, the churches

that are not my father's house but dens of thieves, the huts of millions of starving peasants! No; the great magician who majestically works out the appointed order of the Creator, never reverses his transformations. "If thou be changed into this shape by the will of God," say the seers to the enchanted, in the wise Arabian stories, "then remain so! But, if thou wear this form through mere passing conjuration, then resume thy former aspect!" Changeless and hopeless, the tumbrils roll along.

As the sombre wheels of the six carts go round, they seem to plough up a long crooked furrow among the populace in the streets. Ridges of faces are thrown to this side and to that, and the ploughs go steadily onward. So used are the regular inhabitants of the houses to the spectacle, that in many windows there are no people, and in some the occupation of the hands is not so much as suspended, while the eyes survey the faces in the tumbrils. Here and there, the inmate has visitors to see the sight; then he points his finger, with something of the complacency of a curator or authorised exponent, to this cart and to that, and seems to tell who sat here yesterday, and who there the day before.

Of the riders in the tumbrils, some observe these things, and all things on their last roadside, with an impassive stare; others, with a lingering interest

in the ways of life and men. Some, seated with drooping heads, are sunk in silent despair; again, there are some so heedful of their looks that they cast upon the multitude such glances as they have seen in theatres, and in pictures. Several close their eyes, and think, or try to get their straying thoughts together. Only one, and he is a miserable creature, of a crazed aspect, is so shattered and made drunk by horror, that he sings, and tries to dance. Not one of the whole number appeals by look or gesture, to the pity of the people.

There is a guard of sundry horsemen riding abreast of the tumbrils, and faces are often turned up to some of them, and they are asked some question. It would seem to be always the same question, for, it is always followed by a press of people towards the third cart. The horsemen abreast of that cart, frequently point out one man in it with their swords. The leading curiosity is, to know which is he; he stands at the back of the tumbril with his head bent down, to converse with a mere girl who sits at the side of the cart, and holds his hand. He has no curiosity or care for the scene about him, and always speaks to the girl. Here and there in the long street of St. Honoré, cries are raised against him. If they move him at all, it is only to a quiet smile, as he shakes his hair a little more loosely about his face. He cannot easily touch his face, his arms being bound.

On the steps of a church, awaiting the coming-up of the tumbrils, stands the Spy and the prison-sheep. He looks into the first of them: not there. He looks into the second: not there. He already asks himself, "Has he sacrificed me?" when his face clears, as he looks into the third.

"Which is Evrémonde?" says a man behind him.

"That. At the back there."

"With his hand in the girl's?"

"Yes."

The man cries, "Down, Evrémonde! To the Guillotine all aristocrats! Down, Evrémonde!"

"Hush, hush!" the Spy entreats him, timidly.

"And why not, citizen?"

"He is going to pay the forfeit: it will be paid in five minutes more. Let him be at peace."

But the man continuing to exclaim, "Down, Evrémonde!" the face of Evrémonde is for a moment turned towards him. Evrémonde then sees the Spy, and looks attentively at him, and goes his way.

The clocks are on the stroke of three, and the furrow ploughed among the populace is turning round, to come on into the place of execution, and end. The ridges thrown to this side and to that, now crumble in and close behind the last plough as it passes on, for all are following to the Guillotine. In front of it, seated in chairs, as in a garden of public diversion, are a number of women, busily

knitting. On one of the foremost chairs, stands The Vengeance, looking about for her friend.

"Thérèse!" she cries, in her shrill tones. "Who has seen her? Thérèse Defarge!"

"She never missed before," says a knitting-woman of the sisterhood.

"No; nor will she miss now," cries The Vengeance, petulantly. "Thérèse!"

"Louder," the woman recommends.

Ay! Louder, Vengeance, much louder, and still she will scarcely hear thee. Louder yet, Vengeance, with a little oath or so added, and yet it will hardly bring her. Send other women up and down to seek her, lingering somewhere; and yet, although the messengers have done dread deeds, it is questionable whether of their own wills they will go far enough to find her!

"Bad Fortune!" cries The Vengeance, stamping her foot in the chair, "and here are the tumbrils! And Evrémonde will be despatched in a wink, and she not here! See her knitting in my hand, and her empty chair ready for her. I cry with vexation and disappointment!"

As The Vengeance descends from her elevation to do it, the tumbrils begin to discharge their loads. The ministers of Sainte Guillotine are robed and ready. Crash!—A head is held up, and the knitting-women who scarcely lifted their eyes to look

at it a moment ago when it could think and speak, count One.

The second tumbril empties and moves on; the third comes up. Crash!—And the knitting-women, never faltering or pausing in their work, count Two.

The supposed Evrémonde descends, and the seamstress is lifted out next after him. He has not relinquished her patient hand in getting out, but still holds it as he promised. He gently places her with her back to the crashing engine that constantly whirrs up and falls, and she looks into his face and thanks him.

"But for you, dear stranger, I should not be so composed, for I am naturally a poor little thing, faint of heart; nor should I have been able to raise my thoughts to Him who was put to death, that we might have hope and comfort here today. I think you were sent to me by Heaven."

"Or you to me," says Sydney Carton. "Keep your eyes upon me, dear child, and mind no other object."

"I mind nothing while I hold your hand. I shall mind nothing when I let it go, if they are rapid."

"They will be rapid. Fear not!"

The two stand in the fast-thinning throng of victims, but they speak as if they were alone. Eye to eye, voice to voice, hand to hand, heart to heart, these two children of the Universal Mother, else

so wide apart and differing, have come together on the dark highway, to repair home together, and to rest in her bosom.

"Brave and generous friend, will you let me ask you one last question? I am very ignorant, and it troubles me—just a little."

"Tell me what it is."

"I have a cousin, an only relative and an orphan, like myself, whom I love very dearly. She is five years younger than I, and she lives in a farmer's house in the south country. Poverty parted us, and she knows nothing of my fate—for I cannot write—and if I could, how should I tell her! It is better as it is."

"Yes, yes; better as it is."

"What I have been thinking as we came along, and what I am still thinking now, as I look into your kind strong face which gives me so much support, is this:—If the Republic really does good to the poor, and they come to be less hungry, and in all ways to suffer less, she may live a long time: she may even live to be old."

"What then, my gentle sister?"

"Do you think:" the uncomplaining eyes in which there is so much endurance, fill with tears, and the lips part a little more and tremble: "that it will seem long to me, while I wait for her in the better land where I trust both you and I will be mercifully sheltered?"

"It cannot be, my child; there is no Time there, and no trouble there."

"You comfort me so much! I am so ignorant. Am I to kiss you now? Is the moment come?"

"Yes."

She kisses his lips; he kisses hers; they solemnly bless each other. The spare hand does not tremble as he releases it; nothing worse than a sweet, bright constancy is in the patient face. She goes next before him — is gone; the knitting-women count Twenty-Two.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

The murmuring of many voices, the upturning of many faces, the pressing on of many footsteps in the outskirts of the crowd, so that it swells forward in a mass, like one great heave of water, all flashes away. Twenty-Three.

. . .

They said of him, about the city that night, that it was the peacefullest man's face ever beheld there. Many added that he looked sublime and prophetic.

One of the most remarkable sufferers by the same axe—a woman—had asked at the foot of the same scaffold, not long before, to be allowed to write

down the thoughts that were inspiring her. If he had given an utterance to his, and they were prophetic, they would have been these:

"I see Barsard, and Cly, Defarge, The Vengeance, the Juryman, the Judge, long ranks of the new oppressors who have risen on the destruction of the old, perishing by this retributive instrument, before it shall cease out of its present use. I see a beautiful city and a brilliant people rising from this abyss, and, in their struggle to be truly free, in their triumphs and defeats, through long years to come, I see the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth, gradually making expiation for itself and wearing out.

"I see the lives for which I lay down my life, peaceful, useful, prosperous and happy, in that England which I shall see no more. I see Her with a child upon her bosom, who bears my name. I see her father, aged and bent, but otherwise restored, and faithful to all men in his healing office, and at peace. I see the good old man, so long their friend, in ten years' time enriching them with all he has, and passing tranquilly to his reward.

"I see that I hold a sanctuary in their hearts, and in the hearts of their descendants, generations hence. I see her, an old woman, weeping for me on the anniversary of this day. I see her and her husband, their course done, lying side by side in their last earthly bed, and I know that each was

not more honoured and held sacred in the other's soul, than I was in the souls of both.

"I see that child who lay upon her bosom and who bore my name, a man winning his way up in that path of life which once was mine. I see him winning it so well, that my name is made illustrious there by the light of his. I see the blots I threw upon it, faded away. I see him, foremost of just judges and honoured men, bringing a boy of my name, with a forehead that I know and golden hair, to this place—then fair to look upon, with not a trace of this day's disfigurement—and I hear him tell the child my story, with a tender and a faltering voice.

"It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known."

Of the three pieces of fiction written in the period of his ripest art—the decade 1860-70—*Great Expectations, Our Mutual Friend,* and the unfinished *Mystery of Edwin Drood,* the first-named stands out as a most remarkable performance. Structurally, Dickens never did a finer thing, if indeed he has written any novel which conveys such a sense of organic unity and clean-cut building up to a climax. Dickens was nearly fifty when it appeared. Aside from the artistic quality of the handling, it appeals as an ingenious melodrama, and is rich in the typical

Dickensian characters: Pip, the Gargerys, Jaggers, Wemmick, Pumblechooks, and Wopsles; no Dickens lover could spare these inimitables from the bead-roll that makes him memorable. The grave romantic atmosphere which surrounds Miss Havisham and the Manor House is perhaps less convincing to-day than when it was done; but concerning Magwitch, the convict with the white soul, there can be but one opinion: he is magnificent. The lesson of the book, moreover, "pride goeth before a fall," is not obtruded so definitely as in some of the earlier works. An all-pervasive effect of mellow art bathes the book, which surely deserves to be ranked with the choicest progeny of the author's fecund power.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

I

My father's family name being Pirrip, and my christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.

I gave Pirrip as my father's family name, on the authority of his tombstone and my sister—Mrs. Joe Gargery, who married the blacksmith. As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any

likeness of either of them (for their days were long before the days of photographs), my first fancies regarding what they were like, were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's, gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, *"Also Georgiana Wife of the Above,"* I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. To five little stone lozenges, each about a foot and a half long, which were arranged in a neat row beside their grave, and were sacred to the memory of five little brothers of mine —who gave up trying to get a living exceedingly early in that universal struggle—I am indebted for a belief I religiously entertained that they had all been born on their backs with their hands in their trousers-pockets, and had never taken them out in this state of existence.

Ours was the marsh country, down by the river, within, as the river wound, twenty miles of the sea. My first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things, seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening. At such a time I found out for certain, that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and also Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and buried; and that Alexander, Bartholomew,

Abraham, Tobias and Roger, infant children of the aforesaid, were also dead and buried; and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing, was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip.

"Hold your noise!" cried a terrible voice, as a man started up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. "Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!"

A fearful man, all in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head. A man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped and shivered, and glared and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin.

"O! Don't cut my throat, sir," I pleaded in terror. "Pray don't do it, sir."

"Tell us your name!" said the man. "Quick!"

"Pip, sir."

"Once more," said the man, staring at me. "Give it mouth!"

"Pip. Pip, sir."

"Show us where you live," said the man. "Pint out the place!"

I pointed to where our village lay, on the flat in-shore among the alder-trees and pollards, a mile or more from the church.

The man, after looking at me for a moment, turned me upside down, and emptied my pockets. There was nothing in them but a piece of bread. When the church came to itself—for he was so sudden and strong that he made it go head over heels before me, and I saw the steeple under my feet—when the church came to itself, I say, I was seated on a high tombstone, trembling, while he ate the bread ravenously.

"You young dog," said the man, licking his lips, "what fat cheeks you ha' got."

I believe they were fat, though I was at that time undersized, for my years, and not strong.

"Darn me if I couldn't eat 'em," said the man, with a threatening shake of his head, "and if I han't a mind to't!"

I earnestly expressed my hope that he wouldn't, and held tighter to the tombstone on which he had put me; partly, to keep myself upon it; partly, to keep myself from crying.

"Now lookee here!" said the man. "Where's your mother?"

"There, sir!" said I.

He started, made a short run, and stopped and looked over his shoulder.

"There, sir!" I timidly explained. "Also Georgiana. That's my mother."

"Oh!" said he, coming back. "And is that your father alonger your mother?"

"Yes, sir," said I; "him too; late of this parish."

"Ha!" he muttered then, considering. "Who d'ye live with—supposin' you're kindly let to live, which I han't made up my mind about?"

"My sister, sir—Mrs. Joe Gargery—wife of Joe Gargery, the blacksmith, sir."

"Blacksmith, eh?" said he. And he looked down at his leg.

After darkly looking at his leg and at me several times, he came closer to my tombstone, took me by both arms, and tilted me back as far as he could hold me; so that his eyes looked most powerfully down into mine, and mine looked most helplessly up into his.

"Now lookee here," he said, "the question being whether you're to be let to live. You know what a file is?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you know what wittles is?"

"Yes, sir."

After each question he tilted me over a little more, so as to give me a greater sense of helplessness and danger.

"You get me a file." He tilted me again. "And you get me wittles." He tilted me again. "You bring 'em both to me." He tilted me again. "Or I'll cut your heart and liver out." He tilted me again.

I was dreadfully frightened, and so giddy that I clung to him with both hands, and said, "If you would kindly please to let me keep upright, sir, perhaps I shouldn't be sick, and perhaps I could attend more."

He gave me a most tremendous dip and roll, so that the church jumped over its own weather-cock. Then, he held me by the arms in an upright position on the top of the stone, and went on in these fearful terms:

"You bring me, to-morrow morning early, that file and them wittles. You bring the lot to me, at that old Battery over yonder. You do it, and you never dare to say a word or dare to make a sign concerning your having seen such a person as me, or any person sumever, and you shall be let to live. You fail, or you go from my words in any partikler, no matter how small it is, and your heart and your liver shall be tore out, roasted and ate. Now, I ain't alone, as you may think I am. There's a young man hid with me, in comparison with which young man I am an Angel. That young man hears the words I speak. That young man has a secret way pecooliar to himself, of getting at a boy, and

at his heart, and at his liver. It is in vain for a boy to attempt to hide himself from that young man. A boy may lock his door, may be warm in bed, my tuck himself up, may draw the clothes over his head, may think himself comfortable and safe, but that young man will softly creep and creep his way to him and tear him open. I am a keeping that young man from harming of you at the present moment, with great difficulty. I find it wery hard to hold that young man off of your inside. Now, what do you say?"

I said that I would get him the file, and I would get him what broken bits of food I could, and I would come to him at the Battery, early in the morning.

"Say, Lord strike you dead if you don't!" said the man.

I said so, and he took me down.

"Now," he pursued, "you remember what you've undertook, and you remember that young man, and you get home!"

"Goo-good night, sir," I faltered.

"Much of that!" said he, glancing about him over the cold wet flat. "I wish I was a frog. Or a eel!"

At the same time, he hugged his shuddering body in both his arms—clasping himself, as if to hold himself together — and limped towards the low church wall. As I saw him go, picking his way among the nettles, and among the brambles that

bound the green mounds, he looked in my young eyes as if he were eluding the hands of the dead people, stretching up cautiously out of their graves, to get a twist upon his ankle and pull him in.

When he came to the low church wall, he got over it, like a man whose legs were numbed and stiff, and then turned round to look for me. When I saw him turning, I set my face towards home, and made the best use of my legs. But presently I looked over my shoulder, and saw him going on again towards the river, still hugging himself in both arms, and picking his way with his sore feet among the great stones dropped into the marshes here and there, for stepping-places when the rains were heavy, or the tide was in.

The marshes were just a long black horizontal line then, as I stopped to look after him; and the river was just another horizontal line, not nearly so broad nor yet so black; and the sky was just a row of long angry red lines and dense black lines intermixed. On the edge of the river I could faintly make out the only two black things in all the prospect that seemed to be standing upright; one of these was the beacon by which the sailors steered —like an unhooped cask upon a pole—an ugly thing when you were near it; the other a gibbet, with some chains hanging to it which had once held a pirate. The man was limping on towards this latter, as if he were the pirate come to life, and come

down, and going back to hook himself up again. It gave me a terrible turn when I thought so; and as I saw the cattle lifting their heads to gaze after him, I wondered whether they thought so too. I looked all round for the horrible young man, and could see no signs of him. But now I was frightened again, and ran home without stopping.

II

My sister, Mrs. Joe Gargery, was more than twenty years older than I, and had established a great reputation with herself and the neighbors because she had brought me up "by hand." Having at that time to find out for myself what the expression meant, and knowing her to have a hard and heavy hand, and to be much in the habit of laying it upon her husband as well as upon me, I supposed that Joe Gargery and I were both brought up by hand.

She was not a good-looking woman, my sister; and I had a general impression that she must have made Joe Gargery marry her by hand. Joe was a fair man, with curls of flaxen hair on each side of his smooth face, and with eyes of such a very undecided blue that they seemed to have somehow got mixed with their own whites. He was a mild, good-natured, sweet-tempered, easy-going, foolish, dear fellow—a sort of Hercules in strength, and also in weakness.

My sister, Mrs. Joe, with black hair and eyes, had such a prevailing redness of skin, that I sometimes used to wonder whether it was possible she washed herself with a nutmeg-grater instead of soap. She was tall and bony, and almost always wore a coarse apron, fastened over her figure behind with two loops, and having a square impregnable bib in front, that was stuck full of pins and needles. She made it a powerful merit in herself, and a strong reproach against Joe, that she wore this apron so much. Though I really see no reason why she should have worn it at all: or why, if she did wear it at all, she should not have taken it off every day of her life.

Joe's forge adjoined our house, which was a wooden house, as many of the dwellings in our country were—most of them, at that time. When I ran home from the churchyard, the forge was shut up, and Joe was sitting alone in the kitchen. Joe and I being fellow-sufferers, and having confidences as such, Joe imparted a confidence to me, the moment I raised the latch of the door and peeped in at him opposite to it, sitting in the chimney corner.

"Mrs. Joe has been out a dozen times, looking for you, Pip. And she's out now, making it a baker's dozen."

"Is she?"

"Yes, Pip," said Joe; "and what's worse, she's got Tickler with her."

At this dismal intelligence, I twisted the only button on my waistcoat round and round, and looked in great depression at the fire. Tickler was a wax-ended piece of cane, worn smooth by collision with my tickled frame.

"She sot down," said Joe, "and she got up, and she made a grab at Tickler, and she Ram-paged out. That's what she did," said Joe, slowly clearing the fire between the lower bars with the poker, and looking at it: "she Ram-paged out, Pip."

"Has she been gone long, Joe?" I always treated him as a larger species of child, and as no more than my equal.

"Well," said Joe, glancing up at the Dutch clock, "she's been on the Ram-page, this last spell, about five minutes, Pip. She's a-coming! Get behind the door, old chap, and have the jack-towell betwixt you."

I took the advice. My sister, Mrs. Joe, throwing the door wide open, and finding an obstruction behind it, immediately divined the cause, and applied Tickler to its further investigation. She concluded by throwing me—I often served as a connubial missile—at Joe, who, glad to get hold of me on any terms, passed me on into the chimney and quietly fenced me up there with his great leg.

"Where have you been, you young monkey?" said Mrs. Joe, stamping her foot. "Tell me di-

rectly what you've been doing to wear me away with fret and fright and worrit, or I'd have you out of that corner if you was fifty Pips, and he was five hundred Gargerys."

"I have only been to the churchyard," said I, from my stool, crying and rubbing myself.

"Churchyard!" repeated my sister. "If it warn't for me you'd have been to the churchyard long ago, and stayed there. Who brought you up by hand?"

"You did," said I.

"And why did I do it, I should like to know?" exclaimed my sister.

I whimpered, "I don't know."

"I don't!" said my sister. "I'd never do it again! I know that. I may truly say I've never had this apron of mine off, since born you were. It's bad enough to be a blacksmith's wife (and him a Gargery), without being your mother."

My thoughts strayed from that question as I looked disconsolately at the fire. For, the fugitive out on the marshes with the ironed leg, the mysterious young man, the file, the food, and the dreadful pledge I was under to commit a larceny on those sheltering premises, rose before me in the avenging coals.

"Hah!" said Mrs. Joe, restoring Tickler to his station. "Churchyard, indeed! You may well say churchyard, you two." One of us, by-the-bye, had

not said it at all. "You'll drive *me* to the churchyard betwixt you, one of these days, and oh, a pr-r-recious pair you'd be without me!"

As she applied herself to set the tea-things, Joe peeped down at me over his leg, as if he were mentally casting me and himself up, and calculating what kind of pair we practically should make, under the grievous circumstances foreshadowed. After that, he sat feeling his right-side flaxen curls and whisker, and following Mrs. Joe about with his blue eyes, as his manner always was at squally times.

My sister had a trenchant way of cutting our bread-and-butter for us, that never varied. First, with her left hand she jammed the loaf hard and fast against her bib—where it sometimes got a pin into it, and sometimes a needle, which we afterwards got into our mouths: Then she took some butter (not too much) on a knife and spread it on the loaf, in an apothecary kind of way, as if she were making a plaister—using both sides of the knife with a slapping dexterity, and trimming and moulding the butter off round the crust. Then, she gave the knife a final smart wipe on the edge of the plaister, and then sawed a very thick round off the loaf: which she finally, before separating from the loaf, hewed into two halves, of which Joe got one, and I the other.

On the present occasion, though I was hungry, I dared not eat my slice. I felt that I must have

something in reserve for my dreadful acquaintance, and his ally, the still more dreadful young man. I knew Mrs. Joe's housekeeping to be of the strictest kind, and that my larcenous researches might find nothing available in the safe. Therefore I resolved to put my hunk of bread-and-butter down the leg of my trousers.

The effort of resolution necessary to the achievement of this purpose, I found to be quite awful. It was as if I had to make up my mind to leap from the top of a high house, or plunge into a great depth of water. And it was made the more difficult by the unconscious Joe. In our already-mentioned freemasonry as fellow-sufferers, and in his good-natured companionship with me, it was our evening habit to compare the way we bit through our slices, by silently holding them up to each other's admiration now and then—which stimulated us to new exertions. To-night, Joe several times invited me, by the display of his fast-diminishing slice, to enter upon our usual friendly competition; but he found me, each time, with my yellow mug of tea on one knee, and my untouched bread-and-butter on the other. At last, I desperately considered that the thing I contemplated must be done, and that it had best be done in the least improbable manner consistent with the circumstances. I took advantage of a moment when Joe had just looked at me, and got my bread-and-butter down my leg.

Joe was evidently made uncomfortable by what he supposed to be my loss of appetite, and took a thoughtful bite out of his slice, which he didn't seem to enjoy. He turned it about in his mouth much longer than usual, pondering over it a good deal, and after all gulped it down like a pill. He was about to take another bite, and had just got his head on one side for a good purchase on it, when his eye fell on me, and he saw that my bread-and-butter was gone.

The wonder and consternation with which Joe stopped on the threshold of his bite and stared at me, were too evident to escape my sister's observation.

"What's the matter now?" said she, smartly, as she put down her cup.

"I say, you know!" muttered Joe, shaking his head at me in a very serious remonstrance. "Pip, old chap! You'll do yourself a mischief. It'll stick somewhere. You can't have chawed it, Pip."

"What's the matter *now?*" repeated my sister, more sharply than before.

"If you can cough any trifle on it up, Pip, I'd recommend you to do it," said Joe, all aghast. "Manners is manners, but still your elth's your elth."

By this time, my sister was quite desperate, so she pounced on Joe, and, taking him by the two whiskers, knocked his head for a little while against

the wall behind him: while I sat in the corner, looking guiltily on.

"Now, perhaps you'll mention what's the matter," said my sister, out of breath, "you staring great stuck pig."

Joe looked at her in a helpless way; then took a helpless bite, and looked at me again.

"You know, Pip," said Joe, solemnly, with his last bite in his cheek, and speaking in a confidential voice, as if we two were quite alone, "you and me is always friends, and I'd be the last to tell upon you, any time. But such a"—he moved his chair, and looked about the floor between us, and then again at me—"such a most uncommon bolt as that!"

"Been bolting his food, has he?" cried my sister.

"You know, old chap," said Joe, looking at me, and not at Mrs. Joe, with his bite still in his cheek, "I Bolted, myself, when I was your age—frequent—and as a boy I've been among a many Bolters; but I never see your bolting equal yet, Pip, and it's a mercy you ain't Bolted dead."

My sister made a dive at me, and fished me up by the hair; saying nothing more than the awful words, "You come along and be dosed."

Some medical beast had revived Tar-water in those days as a fine medicine, and Mrs. Joe always kept a supply of it in the cupboard; having a belief in its virtues correspondent to its nastiness. At the best of times, so much of this elixir was adminis-

tered to me as a choice restorative, that I was conscious of going about, smelling like a new fence. On this particular evening, the urgency of my case demanded a pint of this mixture, which was poured down my throat, for my greater comfort, while Mrs. Joe held my head under her arm, as a boot would be held in a boot-jack. Joe got off with half a pint, but was made to swallow that (much to his disturbance, as he sat slowly munching and meditating before the fire), "because he had had a turn." Judging from myself, I should say he certainly had a turn afterwards, if he had had none before!

Conscience is a dreadful thing when it accuses man or boy; but when, in the case of a boy, that secret burden co-operates with another secret burden down the leg of his trousers, it is (as I can testify) a great punishment. The guilty knowledge that I was going to rob Mrs. Joe—I never thought I was going to rob Joe, for I never thought of any of the housekeeping property as his—united to the necessity of always keeping one hand on my bread-and-butter as I sat, or when I was ordered about the kitchen on any small errand, almost drove me out of my mind. Then, as the marsh winds made the fire glow and flare, I thought I heard the voice outside, of the man with the iron on his leg who had sworn me to secrecy, declaring that he couldn't and wouldn't starve until to-morrow, but must be fed now. At other times, I thought, What if the

young man who was with so much difficulty restrained from imbruing his hands in me, should yield to a constitutional impatience, or should mistake the time, and should think himself accredited to my heart and liver to-night, instead of to-morrow! If ever anybody's hair stood on end with terror, mine must have done so then. But, perhaps, nobody's ever did?

It was Christmas Eve, and I had to stir the pudding for next day, with a copper-stick, from seven to eight by the Dutch clock. I tried it with the load upon my leg (and that made me think afresh of the man with the load on *his* leg), and found the tendency of exercise to bring the bread-and-butter out at my ankle, quite unmanageable. Happily I slipped away, and deposited that part of my conscience in my garret bedroom.

"Hark!" said I, when I had done my stirring, and was taking a final warm in the chimney corner before being sent up to bed; "was that great guns, Joe?"

"Ah!" said Joe. "There's another conwict off."

"What does that mean, Joe?" said I.

Mrs. Joe, who always took explanations upon herself, said snappishly, "Escaped. Escaped." Administering the definition like Tar-water.

While Mrs. Joe sat with her head bending over her needlework, I put my mouth into the forms of saying to Joe, "What's a convict?" Joe put *his*

mouth into the forms of returning such a highly elaborate answer, that I could make out nothing of it but the single word, "Pip."

"There was a conwict off last night," said Joe, aloud, "after sunset-gun. And they fired warning of him. And now it appears they're firing warning of another."

"*Who's* firing?" said I.

"Drat that boy," interposed my sister, frowning at me over her work, "what a questioner he is. Ask no questions, and you'll be told no lies."

It was not very polite to herself, I thought, to imply that I should be told lies by her, even if I did ask questions. But she never was polite, unless there was company.

At this point, Joe greatly augmented my curiosity by taking the utmost pains to open his mouth very wide, and to put it into the form of a word that looked to me like "sulks." Therefore, I naturally pointed to Mrs. Joe, and put my mouth into the form of saying "her?" But Joe wouldn't hear of that at all, and again opened his mouth very wide, and shook the form of a most emphatic word out of it. But I could make nothing of the word.

"Mrs. Joe," said I, as a last resort, "I should like to know—if you wouldn't much mind—where the firing comes from?"

"Lord bless the boy!" exclaimed my sister, as

if she didn't quite mean that, but rather the contrary. "From the Hulks!"

"Oh-h!" said I, looking at Joe. "Hulks!"

Joe gave a reproachful cough, as much as to say, "Well, I told you so."

"And please what's Hulks?" said I.

"That's the way with this boy!" exclaimed my sister, pointing me out with her needle and thread, and shaking her head at me. "Answer him one question, and he'll ask you a dozen directly. Hulks are prison-ships, right 'cross th' meshes." We always used that name for marshes in our country.

"I wonder who's put into prison-ships, and why they're put there?" said I, in a general way, and with quiet desperation.

It was too much for Mrs. Joe, who immediately rose. "I tell you what, young fellow," said she, "I didn't bring you up by hand to badger people's lives out. It would be blame to me, and not praise, if I had. People are put in the Hulks because they murder, and because they rob, and forge, and do all sorts of bad; and they always begin by asking questions. Now, you get along to bed!"

I was never allowed a candle to light me to bed, and, as I went up-stairs in the dark, with my head tingling—from Mrs. Joe's thimble having played the tambourine upon it, to accompany her last words—I felt fearfully sensible of the great convenience that the hulks were handy for me. I was clearly

on my way there. I had begun by asking questions, and I was going to rob Mrs. Joe.

Since that time, which is far enough away now, I have often thought that few people know what secrecy there is in the young, under terror. No matter how unreasonable the terror, so that it be terror. I was in mortal terror of the young man who wanted my heart and liver; I was in mortal terror of my interlocutor with the iron leg; I was in mortal terror of myself, from whom an awful promise had been extracted; I had no hope of deliverance through my all-powerful sister, who repulsed me at every turn; I am afraid to think of what I might have done on requirement, in the secrecy of my terror.

If I slept at all that night, it was only to imagine myself drifting down the river on a strong spring-tide, to the Hulks; a ghostly pirate calling out to me through a speaking-trumpet, as I passed the gibbet-station, that I had better come ashore and be hanged there at once, and not put it off. I was afraid to sleep, even if I had been inclined, for I knew that at the first faint dawn of morning I must rob the pantry. There was no doing it in the night for there was no getting a light by easy friction then; to have got one, I must have struck it out of flint and steel, and have made a noise like the very pirate himself rattling his chains.

As soon as the great black velvet pall outside my

little window was shot with grey, I got up and went downstairs; every board upon the way, and every crack in every board, calling after me, "Stop, thief!" and "Get up, Mrs. Joe!" In the pantry, which was far more abundantly supplied than usual, owing to the season, I was very much alarmed, by a hare hanging up by the heels, whom I rather thought I caught, when my back was half turned, winking. I had no time for verification, no time for selection, no time for anything, for I had no time to spare. I stole some bread, some rind of cheese, about half a jar of mincemeat (which I tied up in my pocket-handkerchief with my last night's slice), some brandy from a stone bottle (which I decanted into a glass bottle I had secretly used for making that intoxicating fluid, Spanish-liquorice-water, up in my room; diluting the stone bottle from a jug in the kitchen cupboard), a meat bone with very little on it, and a beautiful round compact pork pie. I was nearly going away without the pie, but I was tempted to mount upon a shelf, to look what it was that was put away so carefully in a covered earthenware dish in a corner, and I found it was the pie, and I took it, in the hope that it was not intended for early use, and would not be missed for some time.

There was a door in the kitchen communicating with the forge; I unlocked and unbolted that door, and got a file from among Joe's tools. Then I put

the fastenings as I had found them, and opened the door at which I had entered when I ran home last night, shut it, and ran for the misty marshes.

OUR MUTUAL FRIEND

Our Mutual Friend has always been a prime favorite with those who swear by the man of Gadshill, and not without cause, for it is a powerful mystery novel, using the device of an assumed personality, and containing some of the strongest scenes Dickens ever wrote. There is a frank element of the theatrical (as so often with our author) which by no means detracts from the appeal, and in reading it a main sense of the complexity and wonder of life is borne in on the sympathetic recipient. Characters like Boffin, Wegg, Venus and the Dolls' Dressmaker testify that at past fifty Dickens retains all his original gift in comic portrayal: while in Lizzie Hexam he has given us almost if not quite his finest serious woman character. Eugene Wrayburn, too, as leading man of the drama, has perennial attraction for the other sex. As a satire on polite society, the Veneerings have always seemed to me capital, though some will have it that they are out of drawing and artificial. Yet, can the artificiality of modish society be overdrawn? Still, confessedly, the writer is not quite so much at home here as when he is championing the ill-treated poor

or displaying the light and shade of the criminal corners of the great city he knew so well in its dens and moral plague spots.

If the loves of John and his Bella seem a trifle uneven at this remove of time, there is still a simple beauty in them that melts our hearts: and humor, that safe antidote to sentiment that is in danger of becoming sentimentality, is always near by to furnish a change of mood, if the reader will.

On the River

In these times of ours, though concerning the exact year there is no need to be precise, a boat of dirty and disreputable appearance, with two figures in it, floated on the Thames, between Southwark Bridge which is of iron, and London Bridge, which is of stone, as an autumn evening was closing in.

The figures in this boat were those of a strong man with ragged grizzled hair and a sun-browned face, and a dark girl of nineteen or twenty, sufficiently like him to be recognizable as his daughter. The girl rowed, pulling a pair of sculls very easily; the man, with the rudder-lines slack in his hands, and his hands loose in his waistband, kept an eager look-out. He had no net, hook, or line, and he could not be a fisherman; his boat had no cushion for a sitter, no paint, no inscription, no appliance beyond a rusty boat-hook and a coil of rope, and

he could not be a waterman; his boat was too crazy and too small to take in a cargo for delivery, and he could not be a lighterman or river-carrier; there was no clue to what he looked for, but he looked for something, with a most intent and searching gaze. The tide, which had turned an hour before, was running down, and his eyes watched every little race and eddy in its broad sweep, as the boat made slight headway against it, or drove stern foremost before it, according as he directed his daughter by a movement of his head. She watched his face as earnestly as she watched the river. But, in the intensity of her look there was a touch of dread or horror.

Allied to the bottom of the river rather than the surface, by reason of the slime and ooze with which it was covered, and its sodden state, this boat and the two figures in it obviously were doing something that they often did, and were seeking what they often sought. Half savage as the man showed, with no covering on his matted head, and his brown arms bare to between the elbow and the shoulder, with the loose knot of a looser kerchief lying low on his bare breast in a wilderness of beard and whisker, with such dress as he wore seeming to be made out of the mud that begrimed his boat, still there was a business-like usage in his steady gaze. So with every little action of the girl, with every

turn of her wrist, perhaps most of all with her look of dread or horror; they were things of usage.

"Keep her out, Lizzie. Tide runs strong here. Keep her well afore the sweep of it."

Trusting to the girl's skill and making no use of the rudder, he eyed the coming tide with an absorbed attention. So the girl eyed him. But, it happened now, that a slant of light from the settling sun glanced into the bottom of the boat, and, touching a rotten stain there which bore some resemblance to the outline of a muffled human form, coloured it as though with diluted blood. This caught the girl's eye, and she shivered.

"What ails you?" said the man, immediately aware of it, though so intent on the advancing waters; "I see nothing afloat."

The red light was gone, the shudder was gone, and his gaze, which had come back to the boat for a moment, travelled away again. Wheresoever the strong tide met with an impediment, his gaze paused for an instant. At every mooring chain and rope, at every stationary boat or barge that split the current into a broad arrow-head, at the offsets from the piers of Southwark Bridge, at the paddles of the river steamboats as they beat the filthy water, at the floating logs of timber lashed together lying off certain wharves, his shining eyes darted a hungry look. After a darkening hour or so, suddenly the

rudder-lines tightened in his hold, and he steered hard towards the Surrey shore.

Always watching his face, the girl instantly answered to the action in her sculling; presently the boat swung round, quivered as from a sudden jerk, and the upper half of the man was stretched out over the stern.

The girl pulled the hood of a cloak she wore, over her head and over her face, and, looking backward so that the front folds of this hood were turned down the river, kept the boat in that direction going before the tide. Until now, the boat had barely held her own, and had hovered about one spot; but now, the banks changed swiftly, and the deepening shadows and the kindling lights of London Bridge were passed, and the tiers of shipping lay on either hand.

It was not until now that the upper half of the man came back into the boat. His arms were wet and dirty, and he washed them over the side. In his right hand he held something, and he washed that in the river too. It was money. He chinked it once, and he blew upon it once, and he spat upon it once,—"for luck," he hoarsely said—before he put it in his pocket.

"Lizzie!"

The girl turned her face towards him with a start, and rowed in silence. Her face was very pale. He was a hook-nosed man, and with that

and his bright eyes and his ruffled head, bore a certain likeness to a roused bird of prey.

"Take that thing off your face."

She put it back.

"Here! and give me hold of the sculls. I'll take the rest of the spell."

"No, no, father! No! I can't indeed. Father! —I cannot sit so near it!"

He was moving towards her to change places, but her terrified expostulation stopped him and he resumed his seat.

"What hurt can it do you?"

"None, none. But I cannot bear it."

"It's my belief you hate the sight of the very river."

"I—I do not like it, father."

"As if it wasn't your living! As if it wasn't meat and drink to you!"

At these latter words the girl shivered again, and for a moment paused in her rowing, seeming to turn deadly faint. It escaped his attention, for he was glancing over the stern at something the boat had in tow.

"How can you be so thoughtless to your best friend, Lizzie? The very fire that warmed you when you were a baby, was picked out of the river alongside the coal barges. The very basket that you slept in, the tide washed ashore. The very rockers that I put it upon to make a cradle of, I cut out

of a piece of wood that drifted from some ship or another."

Lizzie took her right hand from the scull it held, and touched his lips with it, and for a moment held it out lovingly towards him; then, without speaking, she resumed her rowing, as another boat of similar appearance, though in rather better trim, came out from a dark place and dropped softly alongside.

"In luck again, Gaffer?" said a man with a squinting leer, who sculled her, and who was alone. "I know'd you was in luck again, by your wake as you come down."

"Ah!" replied the other, drily. "So you're out, are you?"

"Yes, pardner."

There was now a tender yellow moonlight on the river, and the new-comer, keeping half his boat's length astern of the other boat, looked hard at its track.

"I says to myself," he went on, "directly you hove in view, Yonder's Gaffer, and in luck again, by George if he ain't! Scull it is, pardner—don't fret yourself—I didn't touch him." This was in answer to a quick impatient movement on the part of Gaffer: the speaker at the same time unshipping his scull on that side, and laying his hand on the gunwale of Gaffer's boat and holding to it.

"He's had touches enough not to want no more,

as well as I make him out, Gaffer! Been a knocking about with a pretty many tides, ain't he, pardner? Such is my out-of-luck ways, you see! He must have passed me when he went up last time, for I was on the look-out below bridge here. I a'most think you're like the wulturs, pardner, and scent 'em out."

He spoke in a dropped voice, and with more than one glance at Lizzie, who had pulled on her hood again. Both men then looked with a weird unholy interest at the wake of Gaffer's boat.

"Easy does it, betwixt us. Shall I take him aboard, pardner?"

"No," said the other. In so surly a tone that the man, after a blank stare, acknowledged it with the retort:

"—Arn't been eating nothing as has disagreed with you, have you, pardner?"

"Why, yes, I have," said Gaffer. "I have been swallowing too much of that word, Pardner. I am no pardner of yours."

"Since when was you no pardner of mine, Gaffer Hexam, Esquire?"

"Since you was accused of robbing a man. Accused of robbing a live man!" said Gaffer, with great indignation.

"And if I had been accused of robbing a dead man, Gaffer?"

"You *couldn't* do it."

"Couldn't you, Gaffer?"

"No. Has a dead man any use for money? Is it possible for a dead man to have money? What world does a dead man belong to? T'other world. What world does money belong to? This world. How can money be a corpse's? Can a corpse own it, want it, spend it, claim it, miss it? Don't try to go confounding the rights and wrongs of things in that way. But it's worthy of the sneakin spirit that robs a live man."

"I'll tell you what it is—"

"No you won't. I'll tell you what it is. You've got off with a short time of it for putting your hand in the pocket of a sailor. Make the most of it and think yourself lucky, but don't think after that to come over *me* with your pardners. We have worked together in time past, but we work together no more in time present nor yet future. Let go. Cast off!"

"Gaffer! If you think to get rid of me this way—"

"If I don't get rid of you this way, I'll try another, and chop you over the fingers with the stretcher, or take a pick at your head with the boat-hook. Cast off! Pull you, Lizzie. Pull home, since you won't let your father pull."

Lizzie shot ahead, and the other boat fell astern. Lizzie's father, composing himself into the easy attitude of one who had asserted the high moralities

and taken an unassailable position, slowly lighted a pipe, and smoked, and took a survey of what he had in tow. What he had in tow, lunged itself at him sometimes in an awful manner when the boat was checked, and sometimes seemed to try to wrench itself away, though for the most part it followed submissively. A neophyte might have fancied that the ripples passing over it were dreadfully like faint changes of expression on a sightless face; but Gaffer was no neophyte and had no fancies.

Bella Tells Her Husband a Secret

Her letter folded, sealed, and directed, and her pen wiped, and her middle finger wiped, and her desk locked up and put away, and these transactions performed with an air of severe business sedateness, which the Complete British Housewife might have assumed, and certainly would not have rounded off and broken down in with a musical laugh, as Bella did: she placed her husband in his chair, and placed herself upon her stool.

"Now, sir! To begin at the beginning. What is your name?"

A question more decidedly rushing at the secret he was keeping from her could not have astounded him. But he kept his countenance and his secret, and answered, "John Rokesmith, my dear."

"Good boy! Who gave you that name?"

With a returning suspicion that something might have betrayed him to her, he answered, interrogatively, "My godfathers and my godmothers, dear love?"

"Pretty good!" said Bella. "Not goodest good, because you hesitate about it. However, as you know your Catechism fairly, so far, I'll let you off the rest. Now, I am going to examine you out of my own head. John dear, why did you go back, this evening, to the question you once asked me before—would I like to be rich?"

Again, his secret! He looked down at her as she looked up at him, with her hands folded on his knee, and it was as nearly told as ever secret was.

Having no reply ready, he could do no better than embrace her.

"In short, dear John," said Bella, "this is the topic of my lecture: I want nothing on earth, and I want you to believe it."

"If that's all, the lecture may be considered over, for I do."

"It's not all, John dear," Bella hesitated. "It's only Firstly. There's a dreadful Secondly, and a dreadful Thirdly to come—as I used to say to myself in sermon-time when I was a very small-sized sinner at church."

"Let them come, my dearest."

"Are you sure, John dear; are you absolutely certain in your innermost heart of hearts—?"

"Which is not in my keeping," he rejoined.

"No, John, but the key is. Are you absolutely certain that down at the bottom of that heart of hearts, which you have given to me as I have given mine to you, there is no remembrance that I was once your mercenary?"

"Why, if there were no remembrance in me of the time you speak of," he softly asked her with his lips to hers, "could I love you quite as well as I do; could I have in the calendar of my life the brightest of its days; could I whenever I look at your dear face, or hear your dear voice, see and hear my noble champion? It can never have been that which made you serious, darling?"

"No, John, it wasn't that, and still less was it Mrs. Boffin, though I love her. Wait a moment, and I'll go on with the lecture. Give me a moment, because I like to cry for joy. It's so delicious, John, dear, to cry for joy."

She did so on his neck, and, still clinging there, laughed a little when she said, "I think I am ready now for Thirdly, John."

"I am ready for Thirdly," said John, "whatever it is."

"I believe, John," pursued Bella, "that you believe that I believe—"

"My dear child," cried her husband gaily, "what a quantity of believing!"

"Isn't there?" said Bella, with another laugh. "I

never knew such a quantity! It's like verbs in an exercise. But I can't get on with less believing. I'll try again. I believe, dear John, that you believe that I believe that we have as much money as we require, and that we want for nothing."

"It is strictly true, Bella."

"But if our money should by any means be rendered not so much—if we had to stint ourselves a little in purchases that we can afford to make now—would you still have the same confidence in my being quite contented, John?"

"Precisely the same confidence, my soul."

"Thank you, John dear, thousands upon thousands of times. And I may take it for granted, no doubt," with a little faltering, "that you would be quite as contented yourself, John. But, yes, I know I may. For knowing that I should be so, how surely I may know that you would be so; you who are so much stronger and firmer, and more reasonable and more generous than I am."

"Hush!" said her husband, "I must not hear that. You are all wrong there, though otherwise as right as can be. And now I am brought to a little piece of news, my dearest, that I might have told you earlier in the evening. I have strong reason for confidently believing that we shall never be in the receipt of a smaller income than our present income."

She might have shown herself more interested in the intelligence; but she had returned to the investigation of the coat-button that had engaged her attention a few hours before, and scarcely seemed to heed what he said.

"And now we have got to the bottom of it at last," cried her husband, rallying her, "and this is the thing that made you serious?"

"No, dear," said Bella, twisting the button and shaking her head, "it wasn't this."

"Why then, Lord bless this little wife of mine, there's a Fourthly!" exclaimed John.

"This worried me a little, and so did Secondly," said Bella, occupied with the button, "but it was quite another sort of seriousness—a much deeper and quieter sort of seriousness—that I spoke of, John dear."

As he bent his face to hers, she raised hers to meet it, and laid her little right hand on his eyes, and kept it there.

"Do you remember, John, on the day we were married, Pa's speaking of the ships that might be sailing towards us from the unknown seas?"

"Perfectly, my darling!"

"I think . . . among them . . . there is a ship upon the ocean . . . bringing . . . to you and me . . . a little baby, John."

THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD

The main characteristics of Charles Dickens were fully displayed in the romance upon which he was engaged in his fifty-ninth year when his hand suddenly ceased from its labor. There is in this mellow, tonal composition—so far as it was written—less of the episodic sparkle of life, and of the unrestrained high spirits and zest in comic portraiture than in the earlier books. But there is the romantic bias which underlay all Dickens's view of human affairs; in this case, the tone is grave, rich and resonant, and the material melodramatic—a genre dearly loved of this writer; and it deals with the darker, more somber qualities of human nature; this perhaps bespeaking the veteran who had endured much, and whose condition was strained by work and worry. The liking for plot and mystery, too, is here; the artist is shown in the fact that the complication has evidently been most carefully wrought, proving this book to be at the other end of his career from the hit-or-miss methods of the novelist's beginning. Guess work is still under way over the question of Drood and Jasper as his murderer. This is natural enough and legitimate, in a story like this of plot, suspense and mystery, which in framework and intention it surely is. But in spite of the ingenious cogitations of Andrew Lang and various other critics upon the question whether Jasper killed his

nephew or the young man was to be brought back to confront him, it would seem the part of common sense, after reading Forster's brief account of the writing of the tale, to believe that the denouement involved the discovery of the murdered man and the detection of Jasper as the guilty one thereby; this being in plain accord with the plan as outlined by Dickens, and congruous with such portion of the novel as we possess. But the story is very fine in atmosphere; the English cathedral setting—even with Trollope in mind—has rarely been given with more of authority and charm. Nor is the typical humor by any means lacking; Sapsea the auctioneer, the "solemn donkey," for one example, has the recognizable stamp, which is also true of Honeythunder, the reformer clergyman; although the tendency to exaggeration can not be denied, and in the case of the clerical figure, the didactic satire is exposed in the raw. Durdles, too, is a striking conception carried out with that peculiar effect of chiaroscuro which so often makes Dickens seem a Correggio among the writers of fiction, with Balzac a natural comparison. Yet one feels that if this work had been completed, it would have had a rounded perfection of architecture which should have placed it high on the list of fiction of a man whose latest years as an artist, while they tempered his outlook and chastened the irrepressible nature of his extravaganza, yet added to the solidity and depth of

his contribution. Longfellow queried if it were not "the most beautiful of all" his works.

Dickens wrote short stories that have endeared his name to the world as truly as have his longer fictions. *The Chimes, The Cricket on the Hearth* and *A Christmas Carol* will help to hand down his name to a time far beyond our own; they are household possessions. And in the primate position is the incomparable tale which has done more to domesticate Christmas, if I may so put it, than anything else from an English pen. As Charles Dudley Warner has reminded us, to Washington Irving falls the honor of having first made that holiday of homely import; but it remained for him who produced *A Christmas Carol* to give us the one story which, when we think of Christmas, inevitably comes to mind. Bob Crachit's feast is a permanent symbol of that "Good will towards men" for which Dickens stood; the gentling influence of Christ's precept and example translated into the most familiar terms of modern thought. This aspect of the writer's power is so much more clearly caught, more sharply defined in the tales than in the novels, where the very variety and complexity make for less emphasis upon one quality, that it is dwelt upon further in a later chapter with an illustration from *A Christmas Carol.*

CHAPTER VI

Dickens as Artist

DICKENS, we say, was a novelist, a teller of stories. To see what were the distinguishing qualities which enabled him to win and hold such an audience, we must first try to understand what we mean by a story, and that particular kind of story, the novel. Through this medium this writer accomplished certain great things. The critic must explain how he did it. The burden of proof is on the critic, not on Dickens, who is not on trial for his life, since he has serenely preserved his fame to future generations.

A story is such a presentation of life as to interest us through its interweaving of character and circumstances into an organic whole; it has a beginning, growth and end. Always, to get a sense of story, there must be somewhat at least of this effect of growth and structure. A story, in the artistic sense, differs from life because it thus introduces an idea of completion, of rounding-out, where life itself fails to do so.

And a novel, as it has come to be regarded since it

originated in the eighteenth century, is a story of contemporary social life so written as to place chief emphasis upon the average, daily manifestations of life, with an especial desire to tell the truth about life as it is really lived on this earth. In this emphasis upon modern life, and life that is nearer, more sharply limned and more commonplace, the novel differs from the romance, where the scene is often far away and in the past, and where the more exceptional, heroic, idealistic aspects of human character and happenings are represented.

In respect of the fact that he was ever weaving life into story-form that gave it interest and charm, Charles Dickens was a natural great story-teller. His stories differed from life in that they were more exciting, more enthralling, than life. But he was also a novelist, because he took a burning interest in his own day and generation, and ever strove to depict life as it was lived around him, in the London he knew and loved: the London that was as definitely his inspiration as Paris was the inspiration of that other great novelist, Balzac.

In a sense, too, he followed the tendency of the new form of fiction called the novel, in that he drew types of humanity mainly from the hitherto neglected and despised lower classes—the poor, the outcast, and the criminal. This was common if not commonplace material, and meant a democratization of the novel, which in earlier days had been markedly

aristocratic, preferring to find its scenes and characters among the privileged classes; the leaders of society. But in the handling of his types, the way in which he presented the lives of the "complaining millions of men," Dickens sharply parts company with the so-called realists of fiction to-day. I mean that while his subject-matter might be called realistic, his method of presenting it was essentially romantic. He was a writer of modern romance, who instinctively saw the high lights and the deep Correggio-like shadows of human existence, who could not but display his material dramatically, even theatrically at times. This remains one of the constant reasons of his wide appeal, his grip on the imagination of the reader. In short, he had a story to tell always, and was able to tell it in such wise as to quicken one's sense of the mystery, pathos, drama and poetry of the vast democratic life of modern society.

Apart from his tales and short stories, Dickens wrote sixteen major pieces of fiction, novels, as they would conventionally be called. When they are examined, in sequence, it can be seen how he grew in his grasp on life, and in the technic of his craft, becoming far more truly a novelist in the full meaning of the term when he reached the maturity of *Copperfield, Great Expectations,* and *Our Mutual Friend* than in a tentative early book like *Nicholas Nickleby.* Indeed, in the *Boz Sketches* and *Pick-*

wick, as we saw, he began by writing fiction that was not novelistic at all.

For a novelist must not only give the constructional feeling of life, as we said, but must definitely do certain other things: having a story to tell, he must tell it in this organic way, by means of characters, either described by the author or set directly forth in dialogue; and in an atmosphere furnished by the author's descriptive gift; the whole conveyed in language, whether narration, description or dialogue, congruous to the key chosen, and fit to hold interest and afford pleasure. Plenty of good novels may fail in some of these particulars, but for the full effect of the novel, all of these are demanded. And of them all, it is not hard to see that two are fundamental: the invention that means a feeling for story, the gift for plot; and, perhaps most essential of all, the power of creating character. In this respect, whatever his other defects, Dickens stands forth as the master novelist of the race. He has created more characters who are known and loved of men, whose personalities are visualized in the reader's imagination, and their sayings stored in affectionate memory and lovingly recalled, than any other writer of fiction. There are some three hundred of these memorable personages in *Pickwick* alone; and, it has been estimated, upward of fifteen hundred in his complete works. Shakespeare himself did not create anything like so many characters who are in the

kindly keeping of human regard. Among contemporaries Scott comes nearest to Dickens in this matter, but falls far behind him.

Art is a representation of life by selection and adaptation, so we may enjoy and understand it better than we should without the artist. In fine, art is typical representation.

How far did Dickens obey these fundamental principles of the art of fiction, so as to secure this effect? Since his day, a new theory and credo have arisen. With it has come an altered attitude toward Dickens. Thackeray has weathered the change better than the other novelist. The artist today is inclined to disclaim moral obligations; he takes his fiction more seriously, he never concedes it to be "make-believe." He speaks of "a good piece of work," rather than a "noble lesson." He deems the artist should occupy a detached impersonal position in regard to his work, the attitude of a Jane Austen, a Trollope, a Howells, a Flaubert, a Guy de Maupassant. To hear a Charles Reade, compelled to part with a favorite character, naïvely inquire, "How can I say good-by to my darling?" strikes the latter-day craftsman as absurd.

Dickens, a man of the older dispensation, used the method of his time, and sinned in his relation to his characters, judged by our later standards. He frankly sympathized with his fictive creatures, wept and laughed with them, and rejoiced in their triumph,

sorrowed in their fall. He openly harangued and preached with the pulpit whack of the fist, and the loud tone of one addressing a big public audience. He pointed a moral as well as adorned a tale. And he did it with the unabashed front of one to whom was granted willingly the franchise of his method. Thus, he overstressed his effects, it is said. The sin of overemphasis is commonly imputed to him by those who care more for the quiet impersonality of the present way of fiction. There is the same difference between him and Mr. Howells in fiction that there is between Longfellow and Amy Lowell in verse.

When it comes to character delineation, this results in the charge that he gave us not characters but caricatures; seizing on some particular trait and distorting it out of all proportion to the rounded truth of life. His personages, presented in this wise, seem less flesh and blood human beings than embodied eccentricities. No self-respecting workman, runs the argument, would or could thus maltreat the sober facts about human nature, for the sake of arousing our risibles, or arresting attention by the grotesque exaggerations of a too irresponsible imagination. This stricture is commonly made, despite the fact alluded to—the vitality he has been able to impart to his creations.

In answering the charge, we must first grant to a writer of fiction who began his work about 1836, the technic which his time accepted as sufficient.

In the evolution of fictional technic, Dickens took the method at hand, and improved upon it, as he grew as an artist himself. Obviously, it is not fair to test him by the canons of a subsequent generation.

And, secondly, while it is true that from sheer élan, and carried away by a love for extravaganza, he at times overstepped the bounds of sober art, it is quite as true that he always intended verity, believed he was depicting it, and in the broad essentials, did tell the truth about human beings. He had the histrionic instinct, sometimes degenerating into the theatric, which nevertheless made his pictures unforgettable, and etched his men and women upon the memories of all who read him. His methods might be succinctly described as artistic exaggeration for the purpose of carrying further; but caricature, so-called, is not necessarily lying; it is enlargement for the sake of fun. No people on earth perhaps ever talked exactly as do talk Dickens's famous drolls. But then, what novelist since has ever made people talk exactly as they do in life? If he had, he would be guilty of artistic stupidity. No extreme realist, no pornographic person with whatever good will to reproduce all the hideousness of life, has succeeded in doing so, because even with such, selection and change are imperative, if one would escape being a bore and keep out of the hands of the police. It is all a question of relation and proportion. Dickens, under the impulse of his genius, went further in the

rearrangement of the raw material of life than is fashionable to-day.

It may well be, too, that we of America in the twentieth century, in criticizing the unbelievable oddities of Dickens's characters, fail to realize the London of nearly a century ago which he looked upon; fail to appreciate all its differences, internal and external, from our own time; and also overlook the author's gift for seeing the flotsam and jetsam of human life which is always at hand, if only the eye to see it be present. It might be said that Dickens drew attention, not to the non-existent, but to that which exists if we would only seek and find. But only one person in a generation, a century, has this seeing eye, this instinct for the detection of the rich oddments to be found in the purlieus of cities or the by-corners of the quiet countryside. When we exclaim "impossible," confronted by a typical queer creature from the Gadshill workshop, we must at once ask ourselves: "Was it not next door to us, all the while?"

There will never be unanimity among the critically minded with regard to such a moot-point. Since Dickens's day a school of critics has arisen which looks askance at the tendency in this writer to portray strange, bizarre folk, the estrays of humanity lying beyond average observation and interest. There is to-day, to be sure, a decided sympathy for the depiction of the humble, the poor, the obscure,

the unfortunate and the vicious; in a word, the socially submerged: and this would seem to favor the author of *Oliver Twist*. But the habit formed during the growth of modern fiction under the banner of Realism to prefer not only the common and unclean, but the commonplace, in treating social life, is in distinct opposition to the method of Dickens, who is innocently sensational and sees no reason why the common should be commonplace. Dickens's characters are exceptional, in the sense that you do not seem to meet them near by, and every day. But are they untrue? The very condition of the acceptance and success of such work is that it is based upon some reality. Dickens indubitably does enlarge and make ridiculous; but he does not misrepresent human nature. It might further be said that it is not the artist's business to photograph, although so much latter-day work attempts it, and sets up that aim. The artist in fiction, for example, always changes life in so far as its depiction in the abbreviated formula of that art must and should change it. It is always a question of degree. Dickens, taking advantage of a convention of his time which has since been modified, changed his characters to the result of enjoyment, more boldly than would the artist of similar powers to-day. But the prevalent notion that his folk never were on land nor sea will not bear analysis. He took human beings as he saw them in the London of two

generations ago, and by selection, enlargement, and the heightening of effects which give piquancy, he drew such pictures as to make the scene still fresh-colored and vivid to our gaze. And, again using a simpler method than is in vogue at present, he secured an effect of saliency by showing people with some dominant trait, simplifying the facts concerning that complex thing, human nature, in this way. Thus, Pecksniff is hypocrisy, Micawber optimism, Uriah Heep treachery, and so on. It is no real stricture on Dickens to declare that no woman ever talked like Sarah Gamp. Once more let it is said, it is all a matter of degree.

That sometimes Charles Dickens overstepped the bounds of nature in his inextinguishable zest for fun, his gusto in the forever humorsome spectacle of man, may be readily granted. Ralph Nickleby is a trifle too much "the heavy" of Adelphi melodrama to please present taste; and Quilp in *Old Curiosity Shop* is so horrible as to suggest a non-human monster. But these are the occasional defects of the writer's quality, surely the exceptions. It is a curious fact that even in so extreme an instance as Quilp we are furnished with the character in life who sat as a model for this hideous figure. After all, truth is stranger than fiction. It is false to generalize from a character here and there to a theory of Dickens as the laughable distorter of humanity. And when we call him theatric, as no doubt at times

he is, we must understand that the theater is but the dramatic shaped for stage purposes. Without the dramatic quality in this author, which now and again went so far as to exhibit definitely theatric manipulation, he would be shorn of an important part of his power and success. It was one of the incomparable gifts that made him what he is; it is one of the reasons he lies in Westminster Abbey.

Another consideration: before we can justly declare that such-and-such a character of Dickens is impossible, we must make sure they were not in an old London now passed away. Prevailingly, the persons of Dickens's pen seem flamboyantly picturesque, unbelievably so, perhaps. But we must remember that there was more of picturesqueness then than now in speech, carriage, dress and deportment.

A gentleman contemporary with Emerson told me that he was in the habit of addressing his wife as "my dame." It seems impossible. The garb of a Disraeli or a Bulwer Lytton at a dinner party, as described in authentic documents, reads like a fairy story now. Dickens's own dress up to the end of his life was a survival of the buckish days of his youth when men disported themselves in a fashion to remind us that once upon a time the male bird wore the alluring plumage of courtship, not the female. As with decoration, so with the other picturesque oddities of character. Dickens's whole writing life

was a still hunt for the queer, relishable denotements of human beings, and by preference he sought and found them in out-of-the-way corners, among the derelicts, ne'er-do-wells and estrays of life. He had the reporter's observational eye, as well as the eye of the lover of mankind. Therefore, he saw much that was there, that common men would have quite missed. From his notes and letters it is perfectly apparent that he believed in the validity of his fictive folk; he even gives us a proof of the reality of Quilp. Several times I have met people of advanced years who have assured me they have seen the original of this or that character from Dickens's gallery. Our own inability to note the wonderful variety of creatures made by God to walk this earth may well account in some measure for the sceptical attitude toward the novelist's creative efforts to paint humanity. Personally, I am of the opinion that at least a part of the critical attitude which declares Dickens's characters to be caricatures in the opprobrious meaning of the word, is based upon the impression derived unconsciously from the novelist's illustrators. Cruikshank not only made Dickens's comic folk comic in pictured portrayal, but he distorted the serious characters as well. This fact is significantly illuminated by passages in Forster where we find the author expressing dissatisfaction and indignation at certain of the drawings as misrepresentative and requesting more than once that

they be done over again. I have no doubt, for one, that Dickens has suffered in this way at the hands of the artists. Americans like Thomas Nast, Jessie Wilcox Smith and Charles Dana Gibson have done tardy justice to our author in this respect.

It may also be remarked with regard to Dickens's method of character portrayal, as well as that of other novelists of the early and mid-Victorian period, that they differ as a group from the novelists of our day in one important respect and one natural in the evolution of the art of fiction; a point already hinted that may bear dilation. In depicting human beings, Dickens emphasized, as did his contemporaries, the cardinal traits and tendencies of humanity. He showed the reactions to love, hate, greed, jealousy and ambition; he exhibited the main interests and passions of Man. He showed humanity in its agreements with respect to these mighty, overmastering appeals. In sharp contrast, the later novelists have come to portray not the agreements so much as the subtle differentiations that mark off the individual from the mass. The psychology in the fiction of James, Bennett, Galsworthy, Conrad, Herrick and Howells, Mrs. Deland and Mrs. Wharton is of this kind. Psychoanalysis is a new science. Doubtless, this is a more penetrating study of men and women, a psychology that dives to the depths instead of remaining nearer the surface. It is genuine achievement, this later

work, a valuable contribution, but the earlier one had to come first, and is a broader and more basal thing to do. The present method means often working with a fine brush in a fashion at times meticulous. It is portraiture on ivory. Dickens and his mates painted with a coarser brush and threw in their effects with sweeping strokes.

It is wise to accept both methods, be thankful for each, and realize that the early broad way of presenting humanity had to precede the subtler latter way. The technic of fiction is a development, and the difference between Dickens and Henry James is one of period as well as of personality. It may be readily granted that Dickens's psychology is, in this sense, simple and old-fashioned, while still insisting that his gift for characterization is unique. An illustration of the simplicity of this procedure can be found in his habit of putting set phrases in the mouths of his creatures; a sort of linguistic tag by which to identify them. Our affectionate remembrance of Dickens's character is involved with their typical sayings: we "wait for something to turn up" with Micawber, are "willin' " with Barkis, and "make a note of" with Captain Cuttle, and repeat with delight the sapient advice of the elder Weller, "beware of vidders." Would we dispense with these denotements because they are a rather obvious device of characterization? I venture to think not. In the more objectionable trick

of giving a character a name descriptive of some personal quality, Dickens is no greater a sinner than Thackeray, whom Mr. Howells, with this and other departures from truth in mind, calls a "caricaturist." To the latter-day realist, with Austen and Trollope for their gods, both the Victorian Masters are culpable in these respects. It is best to say, "other times, other customs." After all restrictions are made, the power and the glory remain.

And the compelling force back of this power of Dickens is more than the *vis comica* which is universally conceded to be his. It is an immense gusto which means not only a kind of boyish enjoyment of life as "great larks," but a hearty sympathy with the human case, and especially with the case of the poor and humble, with all who are made wretched by social injustice; this, together with the moral indignation begotten by such feelings. In fact, two things, not one, make Dickens vital to-day in a time when, with the development of the art of fiction, so much in him begins to date from an earlier generation. One is the inextinguishable high spirits, that feeling of good fellowship which is entirely independent of period and vogue and fashion; the other, that deeper and wider feeling which might be described as an expression of social revolt. The former will always be attractive, since it is psychic self-preservation to savor the satisfactions of human contact. And the latter marks

Dickens as a pioneer in the sentiment which has so rapidly gained headway for a generation that it seems the dominant trend of thought in the early twentieth century. Whatever reservations we may put upon his work as time goes on, and the selective instinct of criticism is more sternly applied to this writer, as to all writers who recede into the past, it is plain that he will always be seen as central in his day and generation in sympathetically stating the case of the social outcast and the oppressed poor. To a less degree, contemporaries like Reade and Kingsley are part of the tendency. Indeed, it began in the preceding century. But Dickens's power and vogue brought this form of altruistic expression in letters to flowering in the days when he was publishing *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Oliver Twist.* Therefore, sound-hearted people to-day, while correcting the picture here and there in detail, can not but recognize the noble purpose and the essential truth of the arraignment of society made by a novelist whose function, superficially viewed, seemed to be that of provoking deep-lunged laughter. Dickens's social sympathy harmonizes him with our day, if his technic does not, and such artistry as he learned to command was ever at the service of his social pleading. This may be illustrated more particularly in the next chapter.

It is also often claimed, in reading him to-day, that Dickens's pathos is mawkish and self-conscious;

that it does not possess the continence of genuine art. When he has to kill Little Nell in *Old Curiosity Shop,* he fairly wallows in his grief, and to our taste to-day this is offensive. Contemporaries like Lord Jeffrey and Lord Macaulay, to be sure, did not object, and wept over the scene as they read it by the evening lamp. But it does not ring true at the present time to some. It would be unfair, however, to take this famous passage and generalize from it. There are plenty of other scenes in Dickens's books where the tenderness is unforced and the tears spontaneous, when the present-day tests are applied: the death of Paul Dombey, for example, or David's runaway experience (quoted in this book), or the passing of Smike, or of Magwitch. The author felt these scenes himself very deeply, and his touch is often as sure in them as it is when he is awakening our mirth by farce comedy, or better, making us smile tremulously over some moment of mingled pathos and glee, as in the *Copperfield* chapter just referred to. Nor should it be overlooked, in considering this matter of Dickens's emotional appeal, that when he began to write, emotional expression was far freer in life than it is to-day. This is simply a fact of social history. Men wept without shame, where women weep now. The further back we go, the truer this is. Nicholas Nickleby bursts into tears at the slightest provocation, and does not lose caste with author

or contemporary audience; I would go still further and say that he cries as copiously as his mother, Mrs. Nickleby, were she not the moistest lady in English fiction. If we turn to the eighteenth century, and read Mackensie's *Man of Feeling,* to say nothing of Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe,* we shall get more light upon the point. It was good form in the elder days to show feeling freely; the red Indian repression of the present had not become fashionable. People like the French and Italians to-day, with their ready giving way to the public expression of emotion, teach us how it was with the Anglo-Saxon in the past. Dickens, therefore, must in this respect be judged in his time.

A limitation has also been put upon Dickens's power of portrayal in the remark that he could not draw a gentleman. That he was happiest and most at home in presenting the lower and middle classes can instantly be conceded. It is a limitation of excellence. Plenty of novelists have been able to draw gentility; nobody has equaled Dickens with the humble, the poor and the unfortunate. Yet, this too can be easily exaggerated. Pickwick, judged by the standards of his day, is a gentleman; so is Sir Leicester Dedlock, and poor Newman Noggs, shabby and bibulous though he be. The Veneerings do not seem to me overdrawn, by any means. It is true that Dickens was less sympathetic in depicting the upper classes, avoided them compara-

tively, and gives the effect of being a little off his ground when he attempts them. It may be granted that he did not know the field so well as Thackeray. But too much can be made of this as a defect. There was a certain gentlehood in Dickens's nature which enabled him to perceive and reproduce typical persons of the gentle and noble class in so far as that class illustrates such traits.

Dickens's style has come in for criticism, especially when a direct comparison is made with Thackeray. Andrew Lang has said a wise as well as witty word touching the difference between these two great writers, and the sensible attitude toward them. In his *Letters to Dead Authors,* addressing Dickens, he asks: "Why should there be any partisanship in the matter: and why, having two such good things as your novels, and those of your contemporary, should we not be silently happy in the possession?" And he philosophically adds: "Well, men are made so, and must needs fight and argue over their taste in enjoyment." That Dickens was a careless writer in the sense that he wrote at times too hastily, and without the proper labor of the file (as we have already noted) can be granted; so, for that matter, was Thackeray. The inimitable, easy, unobtrusive idiom and synthetic melody of the other at his best, is not attained by Dickens; this is beyond question. Yet Charles Dickens was a noble master of English speech; remarkable in dia-

logue, description or narration. His English was idiomatic, resonant, resourceful, and rose to real heights of eloquence when occasion demanded, and especially was it adequate to the varied call of his humorous inspiration. For force and fitness of dialogue, in the scenes which have made him the figure he is, he has not been approached by any other wielder of an English pen. His faults can easily be pointed out in these days of negative and literary Don'ts; his virtues are still the despair of lesser writers. Andrew Lang calls the fifth chapter of *Little Dorrit,* which describes the Father of the Marshalsea, "magnificent"; I should not hesitate to apply the same adjective to the fifty-fifth of *Copperfield,* telling of David's return to Yarmouth and the great storm which washed up on shore the dead bodies of Ham and Steerforth. This can be said without overlooking the melodramatic tendency of some of the descriptions, the rhythmic repetends which come dangerously near to blank verse, and the somewhat monotonous flow of certain passages of highly emotionalized writing. As Stevenson has pointed out with respect to Macaulay, the tunes played by Dickens are less subtle and complex than those of later artists. There is a tendency, one might almost call it a mannerism, to condense the method of stage business in opening descriptions, such as that which begins *Bleak House.* But all reservations made, a virile and remarkable writer

remains; not a stylist as the brothers Goncourt were stylists — men who tortured themselves over a phrase; but a man whose instrument was sufficient for the great things he did with it, and in the larger implication of the word, one who commanded style, —in his case, the style being most emphatically the man.

And after all allowances for haste and carelessness are made, and not forgetting that Dickens wrote to Forster with regard to changing one of his characters when the story was under way, "Do you think it could be done without making the people angry?", there can be no question that he wrought manfully to perfect himself in the art of fiction, and—a point commonly overlooked in the study of Dickens—that he gained notably in the architectonics of the art during the generation in which he was actively engaged in his profession. I have made this claim in the discussion of his work, viewed in its development, and insisted that the art of *Oliver Twist,* as a sample of story-telling, is by far inferior to the art of *Great Expectations.* It is my conviction that, in the end, fuller justice will be done Dickens in conceding his improvement in artistry, while his comic genius, which will never be denied, will be less exclusively borne down upon. His sense of story was always strong: before his career as a practitioner was over, he had learned to tell a story as he was unable to when he began

the sketch-work of *Boz* or the broad surface effect of *Pickwick*. It is the difference between the natural raconteur and the conscious manipulator of fictional material.

Let it be said again here, for the sake of cumulative effect, that judged by the severe tests which we now apply to all fiction, Dickens became before he died a craftsman to be respected and admired for the forthright way in which he handled his tools and material. If those tools were not so varied as may be found in the kit of a twentieth century worker, and the work turned out to be less delicate therefor, this is but the defect of his quality, and the limitation of his time, this last an influence from which a Shakespeare did not escape. Dickens must be given due honor for what he did, considering the conditions in which he did it.

CHAPTER VII

Dickens as Reformer

TO MAKE the world better by his work, while amusing it, to be a reformer without being dull and repellently didactic, that is the great accomplishment of Charles Dickens. He began to write when the nineteenth century was but a third over, and he looked out upon an England almost inconceivably different from, inferior to, that land at present, in all that goes to make the sum-total called civilization. Dickens had only just attained his majority when slavery was abolished there, and child labor reduced from eighteen to twelve hours a day. Not until he was twenty-five did ships cross the Atlantic by steam, or was there a Department of Public Education. While he was in the twenties, the Corn Law fight was under way, and the Chartist reform being agitated. He was twenty-seven when the penny-post system, with its quietus on the leisurely old epistolary correspondence, was introduced; and thirty-two when the beginnings of prison reform were to be noted. He was still a young man of but thirty-five in the year when the telegraph first

flashed messages across the land. And it was not until he had reached manhood that the trades unions were given power and the first steam railway was seen. The social contrasts between then and now, too, were such as to make the England of Dickens's day a vastly other world than ours. Instead of hotels, the quaint inns, which play so attractive a part in his books; coaches, packets and post-chaises where are now the automobile and the airplane. Men with their knee breeches, frilled shirts and colored waistcoats were far more picturesque than in the comparatively sober garb of the present. The social habits were more boisterous, and free mannered; eating and drinking, as every reader of Dickens becomes aware, were freer, coarser than is true of table habits to-day. Emotionalism was more expansive and unrestrained, men wept where now they leave tears to women. It was in all ways, external and internal, an earlier, less enlightened, and more brutal, flamboyant age. Above all, must it be realized that the cleavage of caste, and the social distinctions that separated class from class, and the masses from the classes, obtained to a degree and definiteness that serve to throw the democracy of Dickens into all the higher relief. Looking out as boy and young man upon such a social scene, Dickens began at once, in *Pickwick, Nicholas Nickleby* and *Oliver Twist,* to show his hand as a satirist, to excoriate abuses, and to plead with a sympathy

that was fiery hot and intensely sincere for better conditions: he pilloried the evil conductment of the schools, first and foremost the notorious Dotheboys Academy in *Nicholas Nickleby,* and before he was finished, had shown the world well over twenty schools, good or bad, and mostly bad, with the purpose and result of making impossible the old false system which conceived of the child as a sort of little human hopper into which facts, so deified by Mr. Gradgrind in *Hard Times,* could be thrown, and ground out again at call, with penalty, pain and hate as the by-products. From Squeers in his first novel to Miss Twinkleton in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* Dickens was always about his business of introducing modern ideals of education where before the standards and tests were harshly utilitarian and inhuman. And so fundamental was his contribution to child culture before the days of the kindergarten, that we find educators like the Toronto expert, James L. Hughes, and the late William T. Harris declaring that no man of English race has done so much for the right understanding of child psychology as this same teller of stories. Dickens saw and said in a way to make it carry home, that feeling is the basis of all fruitful thought; he recognized that "it is a crime to rob the child of its childhood"; and hence, in the language of Doctor Harris, "stands apart and alone as one of the most potent influences of social

reform in the nineteenth century, and therefore deserves to be read and studied by all who have to do with schools and by all parents everywhere in our day and generation." "No other writer," says Mr. Hughes in his useful book on Dickens as an Educator, "has attacked so many phases of wrong training, unjust treatment, and ill usage of childhood." With such facts before us, it would be utterly a one-sided view of our author to ignore his social contribution in this respect, while bearing down on his familiar power to enthrall with story or delight by character depiction. There need be no arbitrary division into story maker and moralist; it is the blend of the two, so that amusement contains instruction, and instruction is made palatable by amusement, that constitutes the real attraction of Dickens.

By no means does he invariably expose the vicious elements and principles of these earlier schools at a time when England's educational system, with its clash of private and public methods, and its tyranny of religious interference was a welter and a chaos. The gentle Dr. Strong of *Copperfield,* for example, gives a fine picture of what education will always be when it is in relation to genuine high intention and the magic of a true character. But prevailingly, and with the instinct of a born reformer guiding him, Dickens dealt his sledge-hammer blows against the Gradgrinds and Squeerses of the educa-

tional world, in the pictures he drew of no less than eight and twenty schools.

But we must not stop with the schools, in enumerating the reformatory work of this master of humanity. The prisons, and poor houses, the law courts, and the industrial abuses of the day, represented by the too familiar phrase, labor vs. capital, were all of them attacked and exposed by his pen. Who will ever forget the charitable institution in which that unctuous rascal, Mr. Bumble, is a central figure; or Magistrate Fang, as a picture of a ferociously cruel officer in a municipal court; or poor little Miss Flite in *Bleak House,* with her unconciously hopeless case against Chancery; or the vivid sketch in *Little Dorrit* of that Marshalsea, the debtor's prison visited by Charles Dickens the boy because his father, so superbly described as the Father of the Marshalsea, was there incarcerated; or the highly hilarious arraignment of The Circumlocutionary Office in the same novel, a permanent satire on the red tape of officialdom, or yet again, the great canvas, somber and painted in black and red. of the struggle of people against crown in *The Tale of Two Cities.*

And it is a happy thing concerning all these famous diatribes, that we read them primarily as literature, for their power and picturesqueness; yet for that very reason, the lesson sinks in, and is permanent.

Dickens lent all the might of his influence with his own generation to the reiterant idea that a child is a tender plant needing, for proper cultivation and that chance for happiness which is a human right, kindly understanding and the loving tendence which recognizes personality as something precious and therefore to be respected and cherished. He was continually satirizing the older view, embodied in Mr. Gradgrind of doleful memory, wherein the impartation of "facts" was the sole aim, and browbeating discipline the sole way of inculcation. The noteworthy opening scene of *Hard Times,* already quoted, with Mr. Gradgrind in the chair, shows as well as anything Dickens has left us, his sense of the outrage of the wretched old-time method.

The full force of this satire is the better appreciated when it is realized that Gradgrind, who stands as sponsor for such a conception of the child as a sort of little human hopper into which to throw facts, to be ground out by the educational mill and the result dubbed "education," when he applies this principle to his own household, makes a terrible wreck of his domestic happiness.

It is so throughout Dickens's delineation of childhood; the child in the home, in the institutional environment, in the school, private or public, in the streets, in the festering slums and waste places of the city; wherever it breathes, or tries to breathe,

there is this big-hearted lover and observer directing our gaze, often through a mist of tender tears, but often too as our smiles come sweetly because of many a revelation of the loveliness and innocence and purity of these human flowers, so that we may truly see and mark and learn to be wise when we come to handling the most delicate, important and far-reaching of all social questions: the best upbringing of the young who are to become, for better or worse, the future citizens of the state.

Dickens does not prefer to give us prosperous childhood; the little ones who, favorably situated, are guarded and loved and dowered with the gifts of good fortune. No, most naturally is his sympathy with the poor and lowly, his keen eye penetrates into dark and sordid corners where these tiny withered blossoms are thrown on some dunghill to die. These he sees and succors with a royal all-embracing fellow feeling; one after the other, he picks them up and cherishes them in his bosom with that divine gesture of compassion which we are fain to attribute to the Shepard of all the sheep; yes, all of them, though lame and lost, at his call, troop to where Love is:

> "The po' lost sheep of the sheep fol',
> They all come gadderin' in."

Not the drudge Smike only, product of the Squeers's sort of educational Horror, but Little Jo

as well, to whom the London streets proved a cruel stepmother, and Tiny Tim, who, cripple though he was, was happy in a wonderful home love; and David, whom the awful Murdstones did their best to kill, and nearly succeeded; and the Marchioness, the dear wee slavey who always had a cold from damp living, and who so adored Dick Swiveller when he was nice to her; and little Dombey, who was killed by the forcing process of Dr. Blimber; and Jenny Wren, the Dolls' Dressmaker, who smelled flowers when they were not there; and Sophy, adoptive daughter of Dr. Marigold, reclaimed to life through the love of a showman; and Pip, too, with his touching affection for dear Joe Gargery, another child, albeit of man's estate; yes, and those other children of the mind rather than of the body, Mr. Dick and Miss Flite and Barnaby Rudge — these and a sweet host more, surely no other pen has done such service for childhood. What a company they are to fill the roomy corridors of memory and make it a perfumed and pleasant place!

And from this vast and varied portrait gallery, as we examine it, we see that Dickens is always considering the education of the child. After the pictures he drew of the abuse of childhood by the educational system, or lack of it, which made the school an intellectual hothouse where an unnatural forcing process was in operation, it became impos-

sible for society any longer to tolerate such ideals and methods; hence, in our own day, looking back on Dickens's work, we see him as the introducer on English soil of the kindergarten reform, and award him his place of honor due as a significant pedagogic leader. The fact that he was a novelist primarily affording the world amusement by his pictures and personages, must not blind us to the seriousness of the contribution.

Definitely did he fight certain notions of his day concerning the young. One such was the doctrine of the total depravity of the child, as such; which I take to be part of the charming Puritan assumption that we are all lost souls; but which, in any case, has horrid results in its practical working. Another notion he opposed was the deification of the cramming process as against the slow, quiet, enjoyable absorption of a subject which alone bears fruit of character and accomplishment.

Dickens also was an enemy of that overemphasis upon the intellect in education which ignores the palpable fact that it is the chief business of pedagogues to clarify and purify and make efficient the emotions, since the heart and soul play, always have played and always will, the leading rôle in the development of all human beings. Our age, with its god of scientific knowledge, is a little in danger of forgetting this truth, so that Dickens's attitude comes with special meaning to us.

Again, Dickens saw and said that you never can substitute methodology for man in any scheme of education which is vital; that a poor teacher, fortified with whatever aids in the way of the latest method tricks, remains a poor teacher; whereas, the reason why Thomas Arnold of Rugby was a great teacher was not because he had a better method, but for the sole and sufficient reason that he was Arnold of Rugby. The trouble with the new-fangled keys to child psychology is that they are a tremendously convenient barrier behind which the weak sisters of the profession may hide their lack of sympathy, of magnetism, of personality. You can not with success substitute an abstract principle for a personality in education or anything else. Dickens knew it.

And this story-teller who was yet a teacher (we are now beginning to teach through story-telling), saw that to do the child justice you must develop its self-activity, and not bear down on merely an imitation. Bitzer was purely imitative when he defined a horse. Imitation turns out that sickening parrot-like unthinking use of words and of memory which, if persisted in, will put a successful quietus on any real exercise of the reasoning faculty.

And love overbrooded all these principles preached by Dickens, as the pervasive spirit, the motor force, and the sure solution of the problem.

I have more to say of this in the next chapter, with the Christmas tales particularly in mind.

But, as I have implied, in a sense that is more than pedagogic or specifically of the period of schooling and of adolescence, Dickens was a mighty teacher of mankind. He could not help but teach, because he loved fellow man, had the instinct of the reformer, yearned to set right the crooked ways of the world, and never wearied of well-doing in such work. His lessons are not confined to or drawn from children. The world was his school, not all England alone; and surely he was thinking of his great audience of grown-ups, not of the school in the literal sense, when he wrote so touchingly:

> "When the lessons and tasks are all ended,
> And Death says, the school is dismissed,
> May the little ones gather around me,
> To bid me, Good night, and be kissed."

All who know their Dickens, are familiar with the peculiar relation he bore to his host of readers; a relation close, personal, warm; on his side there was always a recognition of obligation to his readers; on their side, an allegiance, a sense of personal friendship, such as to-day strikes one perhaps as a theme for amusement. But the point I would make here is that it meant an extension of the teach-

er's function and rôle, and that in a way this author preferred all the perils of didacticism, to the austere impersonal aloofness of the artist of a later generation.

Never did Charles Dickens tire of drawing types that stood, either negatively by way of warning, or affirmatively by way of enheartening example, for some important trait of character or principle of life. Ralph Nickleby displays for us the awfulness of miserliness and cold-hearted killing of human affection. Micawber suggests that faith in the morrow is a helpful attitude; Mark Tapley, another optimist, shows us the value of a smile before the days of Christian science. Pecksniff's hypocrisy is sure to ride to a fall, while Tom Pinch, in every respect his antithesis, implies that, appearances to the contrary, the meek shall inherit the earth. Sin and crime are ugly in the persons of Fagin and Bill Sikes, not because it is the proper Sunday-school treatment, but honestly to express the writer's wish to strip the law breaker of a meretricious, romantic "property" cloak in which he had been becomingly draped, and show him in his naked repulsiveness. Magwitch reminds us of the possibility of true conversion, however unpromising from the start, and along with it, the potency of a child's influence. And in the important characters of both *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* the avenging terrors of an evil conscience are brought home to us

with such melodramatic realism, if a phrase so synthetic may be permitted, that the reader shrinks from the acts that made such a state of mind possible. And so with a hundred other illustrations.

That he ran the risk—and sometimes succumbed to it—of creating types and "humors," instead of realizable flesh and blood creatures is quite aside from the question here; which is that Dickens could not escape his nature—no man has yet lifted himself by his boot-straps—and refrain from moralizing life. It was, if you will, his glory and his weakness. But it furnished the powder for the field guns of his message; and because of it the message carried further and its detonations are still sounding in the ears of a younger generation. No study of Charles Dickens as story-teller and as artist of fiction can get away from this ground-plan of the man regarded in his totality: he had to teach just as truly as he had to create, and give us joy, and make us laugh and our hearts grow tender in sympathy for distress and suffering. If he were less an artist because more a preacher and teacher, well and good; that is matter for debate. But it were absurd, for the sake of proving him a greater artist, to deny that his whole nature was involved in the attempt, both self-conscious and instinctive, to leave the world better by his words and work. He stands or falls by that test.

CHAPTER VIII

The Crier Up of Loving Kindness

THERE is a certain influence and effect of Dickens which includes all that has been shown of him as humanitarian and democrat and friend of fellow man, yet broadens out into something higher and holier than them all. It is the spirit that teaches Peace on earth, good will to men; it is an emanation of loving kindness that looks to Christ as the great Exemplar, in no way of set theology nor dogmatized ethics, but simply as the divine elder brother who points the path up which all aspiring mortals must climb, if they would learn the lesson of Love translated into terms of living. It is not amiss to say, with this in mind, that Dickens is most potent, at his very best and most typical, in those writings where he outbreathes this spirit and stands for this principle of loving kindness; not so much attacking specific social abuses, as making the teachings of Jesus practical, modern and pervasive. Not at all would I imply that this spirit of practical Christianity, as it might be called, is absent from his work at large; on the contrary, it permeates it, from *Pick-*

wick Papers to the end. The social sympathy in *Oliver Twist, Bleak House, Nicholas Nickleby, Great Expectations, Little Dorrit,* and others yet, is too obvious to need demonstration. But the point is, that in the novels this sympathy generally centers and finds its reason for activity in some definite social wrong; the stupid and cruel management of some public machinery such as the law court, the workhouse, the prison or the school. Whereas, in the Christmas stories, we are presented with those broad, elemental universal human relations which cohere in the home and are not subject to legislative betterment, but rather are sensitive to "every word that cometh from the mouth of the Father." It is life simplified, life clarified, life reduced to its few essentials, that we get in the Tales. And it is this which gives them their distinction, and makes them so illustrative of their writer in his special gift.

The Christmas tales are paramount among his stories in performing this service. Christmas, so markedly Christ's holiday, is a fit time in which to display virtues which belong to the soul of the Christian religion in its widest application and most undenominational estate; which, indeed, belong to and are the essence of all true religion, Christian or other. In *The Cricket on the Hearth, The Chimes,* and finest and most famous of them all, *The Christmas Carol,* we get this great writer unconsciously speaking his deepest message; in such work he

epitomizes a noble mood and instinct of the British people; he speaks not for himself alone, but for his race. *The Christmas Carol* is safe to endure not because it is a remarkable literary feat so much as because it is permanently expressive of a sentiment and a relation which the Anglo-Saxon recognizes and applauds; the sentiment of innocent and kindly good cheer, and the relation of harmony between all men and between man and his Maker. In such depictions, Dickens socializes religion; a meal becomes a sort of social sacrament for the reason that the virtues of gentleness, kindness and happiness gather about the board spread with Christmas good cheer. Eating and drinking, of which there is so much in all his books—to the distaste of some squeamish folk who can not see the symbol for the material details that embody it—are sublimated into a suggestion that some day, in God's good time, life will be universally kindly and generous and sweet, even as now, occasionally, at a Christmas dinner, human beings expand, and grow gentle and take on the image of One who declared, "I say unto you, little children, that you love one another."

Easily first, as I said, is *The Christmas Carol.* The old curmudgeon Scrooge learns through the superhuman agency of the ghosts or kindly spirits who stand for conscience and furnish the enjoyable fairy-lore atmosphere that makes the story loved of all young folk, that he is dead, not alive, until

his ear becomes attuned to that "still sad music of humanity" which calls upon all who hear it to join the greatest confraternity in the world: "the union of all who love in the service of all who suffer." Scrooge does learn the lesson, and hence we leave him a quickened spirit; and our own spirits are also quickened as we thus through imaginative pleasure experience the truths of the life spiritual. Doubtless, it is because of this peculiar service that Thackeray called this story "a public benefit." It is because Dickens wrote it and other things like it in influence, that his nation overruled his private wishes, and he sleeps in Westminster. The scene of Bob Cratchit's dinner, which follows, is in every way an illustration of this effect of Dickens, which seems to me deepest, most lasting, most representedly what he stood for. It is not devoid of his humor, for if it were, it could hardly be typical; but it bases in the grave emotions and the humor itself is less boisterous, more mellow, than that of other moods. And it is hall-marked by the Mr. Greatheart we find in Charles Dickens to explain his persistent appeal, and the love and honor he retains from all classes and conditions of mankind.

The Cratchits Eat Their Christmas Dinner

"What has ever got your precious father, then?" said Mrs. Cratchit. "And your brother, Tiny Tim?

And Martha warn't as late last Christmas day by half an hour!"

"Here's Martha, mother," said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

"Here's Martha, mother," cried the two young Cratchits. "Hurrah! There's such a goose, Martha!"

"Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!" said Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her with officious zeal.

"We'd a deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, "and had to clear away this morning, mother."

"Well, never mind, so long as you are come," said Mrs. Cratchit. "Sit ye down before the fire, and have a warm, Lord bless ye!"

"No, no, there's father coming," cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. "Hide, Martha, hide!"

So Martha hid herself, and in came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter, exclusive of the fringe, hanging down before him; and his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas, for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame.

"Why, where's our Martha?" cried Bob Cratchit, looking round.

"Not coming," said Mrs. Cratchit.

"Not coming!" said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits; for he had been Tim's blood horse all the way from church, and had come home rampant. "Not coming upon Christmas Day!"

Martha didn't like to see him disappointed, if it were only a joke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim and bore him off into the wash house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.

"And how did little Tim behave?" asked Mrs. Cratchit, when she had rallied Bob upon his credulity, and Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart's content.

"As good as gold," said Bob, "and better. Somehow, he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day who made lame beggars walk and blind men see."

Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty.

His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his

stool beside the fire: and while Bob, turning up his cuffs—as if, poor fellow, they were capable of being made more shabby—compounded some hot mixture in a jug with gin and lemons, and stirred it round and round, and put it on the hob to simmer, Master Peter and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course; and, in truth, it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan), hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigor; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner of the table; and the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounting guard, upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last, the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving knife, prepared to plunge it into the breast; but when she did, and when the long expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all around the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by

the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah!

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavor, size and cheapness, were the theme of universal admiration. Eked out by apple sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of bone upon the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits, in particular, were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows. But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone—too nervous to bear witness—to take the pudding up, and bring it in. Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the door of the backyard and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose—a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating house and a pastry cook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding! In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered—flushed but smiling proudly—with the pudding like

a speckled cannon ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that, now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel full of chestnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass. Two tumblers and a custard cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; while Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed:

"A merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us."

Which all the family re-echoed.

"God bless us every one," said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

He sat very close to his father's side, upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him. . . .

"Mr. Scrooge!" said Bob. "I give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!"

"The Founder of the Feast, indeed!" cried Mrs. Cratchit, reddening. "I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it."

"My dear," said Bob, "the children! Christmas Day!"

"It should be Christmas Day, I am sure," said she, "on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow!"

"My dear," was Bob's mild answer. "Christmas Day."

"I'll drink his health for your sake, and the day's," said Mrs. Cratchit, "not for his. Long life to him! A merry Christmas and a happy New

Year! He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt."

Charity, peace, good will, that is the note struck, with unfeigned sincerity, and it is the ground-note in the work of Charles Dickens.

CHAPTER IX

A Last Word

ONE hears it frequently said that Dickens does not appeal to the rising generation, that our young folk do not read him with interest and appreciation. Investigation has convinced me that the statement hardly represents the facts. That those who are now beginning to come into touch with letters often prefer the book of the hour, the current novel, to any examination of the work of a writer whose stories lie behind us more than a generation, may be granted. The age of the grammar school, and that of high school, if not college, has a natural inclination toward literature strictly of our day, nor is the taste an unhealthy one in so far as it reflects a desire to see our time mirrored in fiction. To wish to get a picture of one's own period in the fiction which is written is indeed commendable.

But it is my experience that, this bias once overcome, young people like Dickens when they try him, and as a rule are surprised to find him so enjoyable, so "modern," as they sometimes express it. His

appeal to them is very strong, if only the edition in which he is offered be attractive, and the new reader be not asked to take a ponderous, dust-covered volume from an upper shelf, bearing all the marks of neglect. And it is no wonder the appeal is there, since the fundamentals of human nature are heartsomely presented in these pages, in spite of the quaint oddities of the England seen by Dickens so long ago, and intensified by his individual treatment.

Of course, folk are still to be found, though now an honorable and fast diminishing minority, who remember Dickens in the flesh, as he appeared at the time of his second series of readings in the United States. Such fortunate mortals were brought up on his books, recall the magic of his appeal when it was contemporary, and fondly cherish the memory of the man whose works are even now their chief literary delight. But all such will soon pass from the stage. Those of middle years or moving toward elderly, who find pleasure in the Dickens books, are a goodly company, it is certain. The test of current sales settles that.

An examination into the matter of editions shows that this writer is not only holding his own, but gaining from year to year; more and more expensive sets of his work are appearing, and the attitude of the publishers, a sure indication of vogue, is unmistakably enthusiastic. Dickens to-day outsells

Scott and Thackeray so decidedly as to make them seem unpopular in comparison with him. There is a steadier demand for his books than for those of any other story-tellers except for the temporary vogue of some current writer who is in demand for a year or so and then rapidly falls into innocuous desuetude. So far as we may judge upon the basis of criticism which looks back a generation and seeks to appraise values and influence, Dickens's chance to live and renew his effect upon mankind as the years pass away, was never brighter than it is at the present time. He has already demonstrated triumphantly that he is something more than a Mid-Victorian story-teller of great influence with his contemporaries. We can at least say that his claim upon our suffrages has been recognized by a generation beyond his own, and that another yet to come bids fair to respond to the same magic. And surely this is for congratulation. That a writer who is not only a master of mirth and tears but a reformer and educator who in his teachings, by his eloquent, graphic words, did much to improve the social conditions of the England of his day, should thus have a steady appeal for a great company of readers, even after the particular scenes and types and social facts he drew have passed from cognizance, begets cheerful reflections with regard to the healthy reaction of the community to largeness and nobility of literary accomplishment. It is well that the world should

respond to genius, when it comes this way; but also is it well when that genius is allied with high purpose and the most helpful social results. The twin appeal of Dickens, as I have tried to show, is as author and man; and he is likely to be kept in perpetual affectionate remembrance quite as much for the good he did as for the gifts with which he was dowered. One with such gifts and aims could not fail to leave the world better than he found it.

May it not be said that the realists, analyzers, and psychologists of our day owe a perennial debt of gratitude to a man like Dickens, with his simpler method, his broad, pictorial view, his unabashed, unhidden polemical instincts. The artist of literature at present has a tendency to stand away from life as an observer, using the material it offers in a detached fashion: interested, but aloof. It was Dickens's way to go down into the arena, take his coat off for the struggle, laugh and cry with his characters—in a word, to mix with the scene and be fired by the warmth of the contact. That this seems a rather naïve thing to do now, should not blind us to the advantages deriving from such hearty participation in the creative results. Methods change from age to age, and technic is a progressive matter, since it means an increased expertness in achieving a purpose which itself changes with the change of our ideals. But the breath of life is one; to deny it to the master of Gadshill were to fly in

the face of facts, both literary and social. As I have earlier noted, beneath all the surface idiosyncrasies of his grotesques and drolls, giving them reality and permanency, the great passions of men and women are displayed: love and hate, ambition, greed, envy, charity, jealousy, and loving kindness. The reactions of his eccentric creatures are, after all, the reactions we all recognize as typical of mankind then, now and forever. And it is exactly in this union of salient oddities with universal qualities that the strength of Dickens securely lies. It is not likely that Time, the great destroyer of literary reputations, as of all things human, can take away from him this appeal of common human experience, made vivid and humorous and heart-warming, because seen through the royal nature of the writer himself. It is a part of the business of those who would preserve sound literature for the joy it can give the world, and for its function as a great civilizing agency, to exploit and help to make permanent the influence of a man like Dickens. This should be alike the aim of the critic and the educator. The way to know Dickens is to read him; that is the one royal road to appreciation of him or of anybody else. In a critical, sophisticated time like ours, the danger is that so much critical apparatus shall gather about a major author that the author himself will never be reached. The type of person who talks glibly about some great writer, and is familiar with

what has been said about him, without possessing any real appreciation based on an examination of his works, is not unknown. Shakespeare has been so edited as almost to disappear: that is, Shakespeare, the Elizabethan, the practical playwright and actor-manager, the imperfect condition of whose manuscripts is proof positive of the haste with which he composed, and his indifference to posterity.

Dickens is freely quoted from in this book, that the author may not be lost in the process of criticism. The hope is, that this partial reading may lead on to the slow, leisured assimilative enjoyment of all his stories in the proper chronologic arrangement. Thus, and thus only, can one come to see what manner of man he was, and get the full usufruct of his genius.

The present writer once tried to embody a reflection of personal feeling for Dickens in the following piece of verse, which may be quoted here, in leaving the subject; the necessary concision and increased saliency of poetic expression will perhaps serve to sharpen the impression it is desired to convey:

WITH DICKENS AT THE CHRISTMAS HEARTH

Before the Christmas hearth I muse alone,
And visions of the past, for grave and gay,
Rise from the ruddy coals. Outside, the moan
Of homeless winds is chidden by the lay
Sweet-sung by children who keep holiday,
Making the season's mood their very own.

And slowly, while I gaze and dream and grow
  Less lonesome, do the sights and sounds of earth
Fade, and my fancy wanders to and fro
  With a great Master of lament and mirth
Who waved his wand to gild the Long Ago.

A Wondrous Company! Micawber smiles
  In spite of poverty; and Little Nell,
Too frail a flower, travels her weary miles,
  Then falls on sleep; and David tries to tell
  The trials of the young; now Pickwick's spell
  Makes laughter easy; on a pinnacle
Of sacrifice sits Carton, 'midst war's wiles.

Now the air sweetens, for those brothers twain,
  The blithesome Cheerybles, have preached their creed
Of kindness; honest Tapley hails again
  A world too pleasant; while their horses speed,
  The Wellers make the welkin ring indeed;
Lo! Dedlock House looms darkly through the rain.

And look! the tiny dressmaker limps by;
  And she, eternal type of faithfulness,
Dorrit, whom prisons do not daunt; her eye
  Is for her father; next, in seaman's dress
  Quaint Captain Cuttle lifts his hook to bless
His darlings; Barkis at low tide must die.

Drolls, villains, gentle folk of all degrees,
  Make populous the air, an hundred strong;
Last comes, as fits the season, Scrooge, his knees
  A-tremble, till he harks the Christmas song
  Of Love, and knows that spite and greed are wrong,
And how that charity is more than these.

Master of human hearts! No Christmas tide
  Whose chants are not the sweeter and whose cheer
Is not more blest since Dickens lived and died!
  The savor of his teaching makes each year
  Richer in homely virtues, doth endear
Man unto man; hence, shall he long abide.

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